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No.97 ISSN 1449-2547
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BeanScene covershoot

The Coffee Commune,
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For the first *BeanScene* covershoot of 2025, we headed to Queensland to capture the new xBloom Studio smart brewer with Australian distributor CoffeeTools. With the machine recently introduced to the café at The Coffee Commune in Bowen Hills, the roasting and education hub was the ideal setting to shoot the equipment in situ.

"At the end of 2024, The Coffee Commune team added an xBloom Studio to their bar to brew pourovers for their customers. I wanted to be able to show the machine in operation in a real-life setting where it's being used every day," says Curtis Arnold, Director of CoffeeTools.

"The xBloom is one of our best-selling brands and this second model brings something new to the table in terms of flexibility and versatility. It's an honour to showcase it on the cover of *BeanScene*."

As a regular collaborator with The Coffee Commune, producing video content and capturing images of the space, Photographer Daniel Hammond of Kub Productions is familiar with the café's lighting, space, and setup.

"As Curtis directed, the machine was to be the focus, being used during a busy café scenario, but to achieve this with our setup required a post-close shoot," says Daniel.

"The machine was easy to shoot as it is a beautiful object besides its functionality, and the sharp lines of the device informed the choice of background."

Cafés are often cluttered spaces, so his challenge was to find a clean and contemporary backdrop that would put the xBloom Studio front and centre. Daniel also had the added challenge of photographing the clean and contemporary white model – it's also available in black – which can blend into neutral backgrounds.

Curtis says he hasn't received a single piece of negative feedback on the machine since it was launched in Australia in May.

"There are a lot of challenges to serving pourover coffee in a café setting. It's time consuming, takes up a lot of space, and can be hard to achieve consistency when you have different members of staff preparing the same beans," he says.

"The xBloom offers repeatable results without the need for additional labour or training." ▫

For more information, visit **coffeetools.au**

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BeanScene Magazine

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SUBSCRIPTIONS
03 9690 8766
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BeanScene magazine is available by subscription from the publisher.
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Contributors

Each issue of *BeanScene* we profile a few of our talented contributors.

Victor Vu is the ASCA Australian Latte Art Champion. He placed seventh in the 2024 World Latte Art Championhip (WLAC) in Denmark in June. Born in Vietnam, Victor worked for three years in hospitality before coming to Australia to perfect his latte art skills. He won the 2018 Milklab Barista Battle, 2020 and 2024 ASCA Australian Latte Art Championships, and placed fifth in the 2022 WLAC. He currently works at Ona Coffee Melbourne.

Emma McDougall is the Communication and Administration Coordinator for the NZSCA. After gaining a degree in hospitality management, Emma has worked in Sydney, Dublin, Auckland, London, and, most recently, Wellington. She has owned and managed cafés and tech-judged the New Zealand Barista Championship in 2015 and 2016. Now, she gets to help run them. One of the greatest joys she gets from the coffee industry is watching young people progress through their coffee journey.

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BeanScene Magazine

A perfect storm

Café owners are a resilient bunch. Since the turn of the decade, they've had unimaginable hurdles to overcome, but many have, with the support of their local communities, navigated the obstacles to continue to fly the flag for Australian café culture.

As we enter 2025, another challenge is on the horizon. It's not a pandemic or financial crisis this time but instead a series of visa amendments. As hospitality venues continue to experience skilled staff shortages due to a multitude of factors, the Australian government has made several changes that will affect who café owners can employ.

Part of the beauty of the coffee industry in Australia is its diversity, with international baristas and café managers adding to the heterogeneity for which it's celebrated. As one of the most respected coffee scenes in the world, it attracts baristas from around the globe who come to work and be a part of an iconic industry.

The latest statistics show about 20 per cent of hospitality workers in Australia are visa holders and about 35 per cent were not born in this country. For many years, overseas workers have formed the backbone of the hospitality industry, filling relatively low-paid roles that are often no longer appealing to locals.

According to Wes Lambert, CEO of the Australian Restaurant and Café Association (ARCA), the recent visa changes are "a recipe for disaster". In December 2024, café managers were removed from the Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL) that determines the Core Skills stream of the new Skills in Demand visa, which replaces the Temporary Skills Shortage visa.

In this issue of *BeanScene*, we explore the visa changes in depth, hear from café owners and baristas impacted by the amendments, and get advice from Wes on what can be done to prepare.

For those wanting further advice on the subject, visa changes and staff shortages will be one of the topics discussed at the Café Owners Education Summit at Melbourne International Coffee Expo (MICE), which takes place at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre from 20 to 22 March.

The interactive series of unmissable panel discussions held across the event will tackle a range of important and timely topics and issues relevant to the coffee industry. The sessions are free to attend for ticket holders and will feature an array of leading industry professionals.

If you haven't secured your MICE ticket yet, bag one before they sell out. With more than 50 roasters set to appear at this year's event and an extended program of educational content, it's tipped to be one of the busiest events to date.

See you there.

KATHRYN LEWIS
EDITOR
BeanScene Magazine

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Australian Latte Art Champion Jibbi Little opens café in Sydney

Jibbi Coffee Roasters, founded by Australian Latte Art and Australia's Richest Barista champion Jibbi Little, has opened its first café in Sydney's Surry Hills.

The boutique venue on Commonwealth Street showcases some of Australia's finest specialty coffees, crafted by the award-winning barista and her dedicated team in a range of espresso and filter options.

"Opening my first café has been an exciting journey and a dream come true. It's a space where people can enjoy not just great coffee but also the passion and precision behind it," says Jibbi.

"At our café, customers can expect a warm atmosphere, freshly roasted coffee served as black, white, or pourovers, and a focus on showcasing a wide range of flavours – from classic profiles to experimental and competition-level coffees."

Jibbi says the café reflects her love for latte art and barista education, with every cup crafted with care and creativity.

"I'm thrilled to share this new chapter," she says.

"I hope it becomes a destination for coffee lovers to explore and connect."

COLD BREW
BATCH BREW

Image: Prime Creative Media.

Inaugural Coffee Industry Heroes awards to celebrate Australian talent

As part of a flurry of exciting new events and activations for its 2025 show, Melbourne International Coffee Expo (MICE) has launched the Coffee Industry Heroes awards.

Nominated by members of the Australian coffee community, the new awards recognise outstanding individuals in the coffee and café sector in three categories: Community Champion, Lifetime Achievement, and Next-Gen talent. Nominations are open to all until 14 February and the winners will be decided by an independent judging panel.

The inaugural Coffee Industry Heroes will be revealed at the Official MICE After-Party at Showtime Events Centre on Saturday 22 March. Tickets for the after party are available to purchase from the MICE website, while access to the event is included as part of the MICE Access All Areas ticket which also includes a complimentary drinks voucher.

To secure your ticket to MICE2025, visit internationalcoffeeexpo.com/tickets

Coffee industry heroes

Image: Prime Creative Media.

Timing your coffee could be the key to longer life

Image: Nina/stock.adobe.com.

Partial to an afternoon flat white or filter coffee? It could be time to change your habit. New research suggests people who drink coffee in the morning have a lower risk of dying from cardiovascular disease and a lower overall mortality risk compared to all-day coffee drinkers.

The study, published in the *European Heart Journal*, included 40,725 adults who took part in the US National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) between 1999 and 2018.

Around 36 per cent of people in the study were morning coffee drinkers (they primarily drank coffee before midday), 16 per cent of people drank coffee throughout the day (morning, afternoon, and evening) and 48 per cent were not coffee drinkers.

Compared with people who did not drink coffee, morning coffee drinkers were 16 per cent less likely to die of any cause and 31 per cent less likely to die of cardiovascular disease. However, there was no reduction in risk for all-day coffee drinkers compared to non-coffee drinkers.

Lead Researcher Dr Lu Qi says this is the first study testing coffee drinking timing patterns and health outcomes.

"Our findings indicate that it's not just whether you drink coffee or how much you drink, but the time of day when you drink coffee that's important. We don't typically give advice about timing in our dietary guidance, but perhaps we should be thinking about this in the future," he says.

"A possible explanation [of the results] is that consuming coffee in the afternoon or evening may disrupt circadian rhythms and levels of hormones such as melatonin. This, in turn, leads to changes in cardiovascular risk factors such as inflammation and blood pressure."

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There are currently just shy of 10,000 vacant barista roles in Australia advertised on a single recruitment website. Image: Anton/stock.adobe.com.

A perfect storm

Australia is in the midst of a barista shortage, yet a series of new visa rules could make it even harder for café owners to hire and retain skilled international staff. *BeanScene* investigates.

As of mid January 2025, there were just shy of 10,000 barista and 2500 café manager roles advertised on Australia's most popular recruitment website. These numbers are just a drop in the ocean for the hospitality sector, which for the past four years has experienced a dearth of skilled staff amid other challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis and high coffee prices.

According to Wes Lambert, CEO of the Australian Restaurant and Café Association (ARCA), the café sector is bearing the brunt of the issue.

"Australia has a severe shortage of baristas. There are more open barista positions than any other segment of the Accommodation and Foodservice sector," he says.

"Cafés are doing it the toughest and yet, on 3 December 2024, the current government removed café managers from the Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL)."

> "AUSTRALIA HAS A SEVERE SHORTAGE OF BARISTAS. THERE ARE MORE OPEN BARISTA POSITIONS THAN ANY OTHER SEGMENT OF THE ACCOMMODATION AND FOODSERVICE SECTOR."

COMING UP SHORT

In a shake up of the existing visa program, the new CSOL replaces the occupation lists that were part of the temporary skills visa. On 7 December 2024, the Temporary Skill Shortage (subclass 482) visa was replaced by the Skills in Demand visa, which includes a Core Skills stream determined by the CSOL. While café managers previously featured on the skilled occupation list, they do not feature on the new CSOL.

"This is a big problem because very few cafés qualify for the Premium Dining Labour Agreement stream, which applies to businesses that have more than $2 million in revenue, a wine list, and are not franchised. Therefore, as it stands there is no pathway for café managers to come into Australia and be sponsored," says Wes.

"According to the real-time occupation shortage calculator on the Jobs and Skills Australia website, there isn't a shortage of café and restaurant managers nationally – although there is in certain states and regions. However, this is little consolation for the thousands of café and restaurant owners who have sponsored managers whose visas won't be renewed or those who were looking to sponsor and won't be able to."

The most recent stats acquired by ARCA report that about 20 per cent of workers in the Accommodation and Foodservice sector are visa holders and about 35 per cent in the sector were not born in Australia. For decades, international staff have formed the backbone of the Australian hospitality industry.

The decision by the government to remove café managers from the list is part of a suite of changes over the past couple of years that Wes describes as "a recipe for disaster" amid the current shortage of skilled workers in the sector. He believes the shortfall of baristas is a result of multiple factors, including a reduction in young Australians wanting to work in the sector.

"Australian Gen Zs and Millennials don't necessarily want to work in the Accommodation and Foodservice sector. Some will take up jobs when they're 15 or 16, but those who go to university often move away from work altogether or take fewer shifts because they're being supported by the bank of mum and dad," he says.

CAP IT OFF

Another element that has contributed to the shortage is the cap on working hours for international students. Introduced to encourage students to prioritise studies, the cap of 24 working hours per week was in place before the COVID-19 pandemic and removed during the pandemic. It was reinstated in July 2023.

"This was compounded by the recent attempt by the federal government to introduce a cap to the number of international students studying in Australia," says Wes.

Wes Lambert, CEO of the Australian Restaurant and Café Association, says the visa changes are "a recipe for disaster". Image: Wes Lambert.

As well as international students, working holiday makers have traditionally contributed to Australia's hospitality workforce. For some countries, there is a cap on the number of first Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visas that can be granted. Wes says the current government has placed caps on many of the countries that the hospitality industry previously relied upon for workers.

"Taking into account all these factors, you have a situation where cafés end up being worse than almost any other business type," he says.

"One million of the 13 million people employed in Australia work in the Accommodation and Foodservice sector. It's a foundation industry: it's relatively low paid, relatively low skilled, and it underpins the entire workforce of Australia. Therefore, these sweeping changes to migration have a huge impact and effect on thousands of businesses."

Before the CSOL was confirmed in December, throughout 2024 there were rumours of changes in Victoria and New South Wales, with many believing Western Australia would be a safe haven for café managers seeking sponsorship.

"There are regional areas and certain state-based agreements where, for example, Pacific Islanders can come to certain industries and work under agreement. However, that is different from CSOL which is nationwide," says Wes.

"Some states will have agreements with particular regional areas, but a standard café in a CBD cannot sponsor a café manager and will be affected by the changes in CSOL, international student caps, international student working hours, and working holiday makers from certain countries."

Wes stresses that these changes have been years in the making so it will take some time to see the impact on the café industry. He believes it won't be until October 2025, when the next high season kicks off, that the visa changes will be felt by café and restaurant owners.

When the CSOL was announced in December, ARCA received dozens of emails from café and restaurant owners currently sponsoring individuals who were very disappointed.

"They're worried about the uncertainty in migration that is currently hanging above the heads of businesses," he says.

"Uncertainty is never a good thing when it comes to business and business investment. Human capital and human resources are a huge factor. If you don't have enough people to expand your business, it becomes impossible."

EXPANSION GROUNDED

Jacob Maarabani, Owner of Atrium café in Sydney Airport's Terminal 1, says these visa changes have had a huge impact on his business, which is reliant on international staff and was already struggling to retain skilled baristas.

"These changes have impacted our ability to retain skilled international staff, who are such an integral part of our team. Operating in an international hub like Sydney Airport, we rely on staff who are passionate about hospitality and willing to adapt to the unique environment of the airport," he says.

He believes the biggest repercussion of having a high turnover of staff is consistency and quality of the product. As a café owner, he says the government isn't helping his business prosper.

"Having a high turnover of staff affects the consistency and quality we strive to deliver to travellers. Retaining experienced team members not only helps our business but ensures visitors have a seamless and high-quality experience at the airport," says Jacob.

"The airport is an exciting place to work, connecting us to people from all over the world. I'm committed to doing everything I can to support my staff and help them grow with us.

"I hope future policies can align with this vision, enabling businesses like mine to thrive in such a dynamic environment."

Café Manager Edward Leong recently moved to Western Australia. Image: Edward Leong.

HEADING WEST

Until late 2024, Indonesian national Edward Leong was the Café Manager of Pablo & Rusty's Sydney CBD venue. Edward loved his job and the city he'd called home since 2017, yet he says the removal of café managers from the CSOL left him no other option but to leave the state in order to remain in Australia.

"It was very sad to have to leave the company and the team in Sydney. I built a culture there and contributed a lot to the New South Wales economy," he says.

"There are plenty of café manager roles currently available in Western Australia, so there are a lot more opportunities for me there now."

As hospitality and tourism is a priority sector for migration in Western Australia, Edward hopes the move with enable him to seek nomination for permanent residency – something he says is no longer an option for him in New South Wales.

"It's a huge change for me. I don't know anyone in Western Australia. I've lived in Sydney for the past seven years and now I have to leave everything behind," he says.

"The majority of people view café and restaurant managers as a low-skilled employment, but that's not the case. I've done my postgraduate degree and applied high level business strategy into the hospitality setting I work within."

THE ROAD AHEAD

While each employment situation is unique, ARCA is sharing straightforward advice for café owners affected by the visa changes.

"We encourage everyone who can to get on a pathway to permanent residency, self sponsor, or continue their education," says Wes.

"There's also a huge call for the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system [a government-run vocational education and training pathway] to up its game to produce more restaurant and café managers." ◘

Atrium café in Sydney Airport's Terminal 1 struggles to recruit skilled café managers. Image: Atrium.

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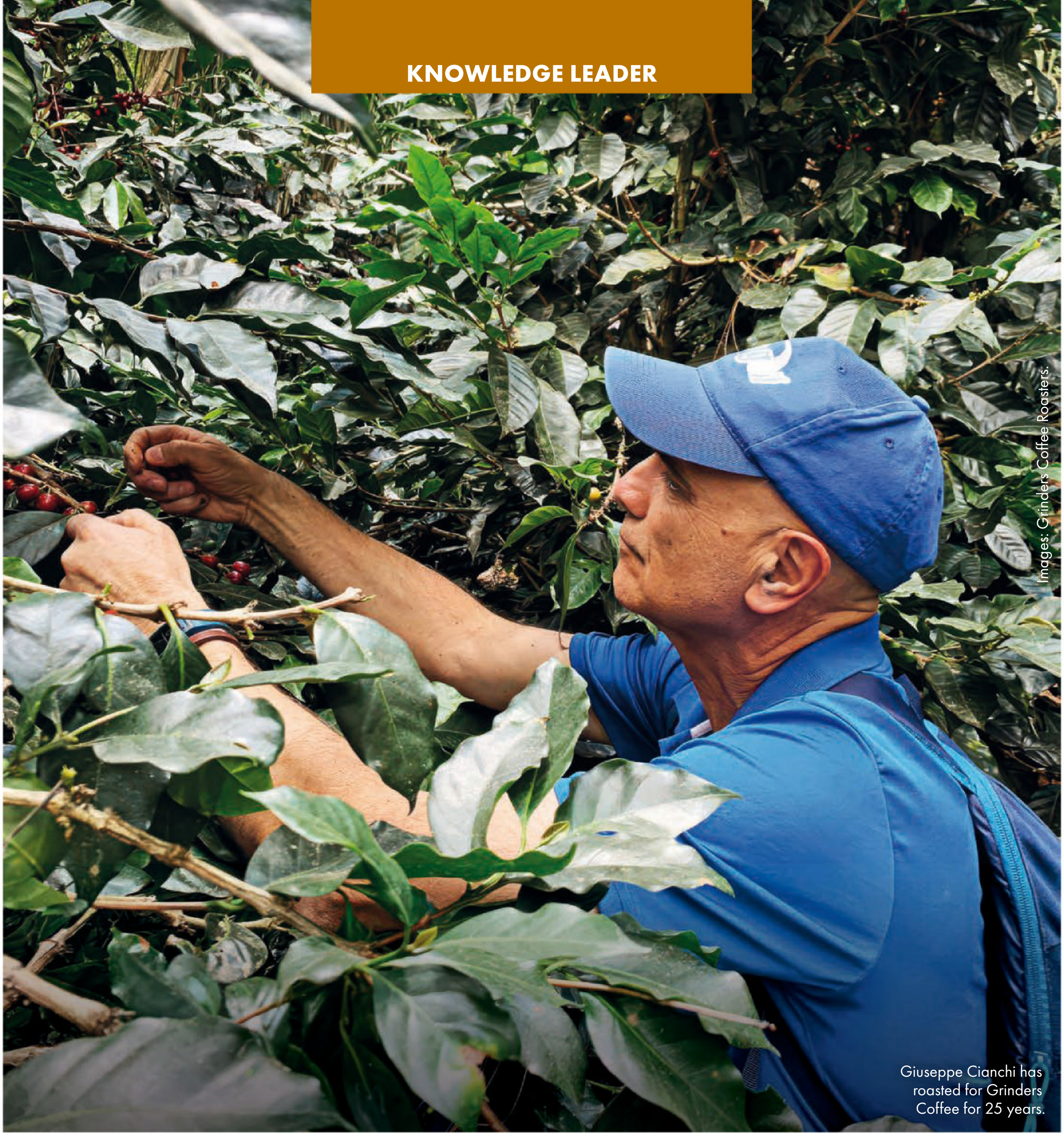


Images: Grinders Coffee Roasters.

Giuseppe Cianchi has roasted for Grinders Coffee for 25 years.

Keeper of the flames

Grinders Coffee Master Roaster Giuseppe Cianchi reflects on a quarter of a century in the industry and how Australian coffee culture continues to evolve.

When Giuseppe Cianchi landed a roasting role at Melbourne's Grinders Coffee Roasters in 2000, he had zero experience in the industry. Returning to the country he grew up in after working in banking in Italy, it was his European heritage that persuaded Founder Giancarlo Gusti to give him the job and teach him his trade.

Twenty-five years later, Giuseppe is still the keeper of the flames at Grinders Coffee as the long-standing roastery's Master Roaster and Procurement Manager. The industry has changed drastically since his early days in the business, but being part of a company with such a rich history means many of the traditions of the trade remain unchanged.

"When I started in my role at Grinders, we had six blends. I'm very proud that two of those blends are still part of our collection today and remain popular," Giuseppe tells *BeanScene*.

"Naturally, Australian tastes and preferences have evolved over the past 25 years. Our range has grown and shifted too, but there are still a lot of people who enjoy the more traditional flavours we continue to offer."

Looking back to the turn of the millennium, Giuseppe says specialty coffee culture hadn't yet taken off in Australia. Roasters such as Grinders were very much embedded in their communities, serving cups of coffee and selling beans to locals from its Lygon Street store.

"The coffee culture at the time was driven by the local Italians, who would visit our shop to buy beans to brew at home. We would have big baskets of roasted single origin beans and the customers would

TORREFAZIONE
caffé
277
GRINDERS
coffee house

Established by Giancarlo Gusti in 1962, Grinders has grown into one of Australia's most recognised coffee roasters, supplying venues across the country.

make up their own blends over the counter, asking for a bit of this coffee and a bit of that depending on their preferred tastes. It was exactly how the coffee shops functioned back in Italy," he says.

"At the time, we also had drivers who would sell coffee beans out of the back of their vans. We did have wholesale clients, but selling direct to consumers was the biggest part of our business."

As coffee culture started to disperse from the localised communities to embrace the whole of the country, Grinders expanded to create a range of coffees to appeal to every kind of coffee drinker in Australia. A growing coffee market saw technology advance and the traditional role of the roaster evolve.

"When I started out, we used manual roasters – the sort that have been used for decades. They were great because if you made a mistake, you'd learn from it and work out what you'd done wrong. If the batch was not right, you'd have to redo it, so you got a lot of practice," says Giuseppe.

As well as learning from Giancarlo and former Grinders roaster Giulio Superina, he was sent to Seattle to undertake a roasting course with the Specialty Coffee Association of America. For the first four years, Giuseppe roasted on the company's 25-kilogram and 60-kilogram roasters at its two roasting facilities in Melbourne. But, in 2004, the manual 60-kilogram roaster was replaced with a fully automatic 120-kilogram Brambati model at the new Grinders roasting facility in Fairfield.

"I had to relearn everything I knew about roasting. Giancarlo would call me into his office and say 'you spend all your time at that machine, they said all you'd have to do is press a button'. I had to explain it wasn't that simple and there was a lot for me to learn from the Brambati technicians," he says.

Giuseppe's challenge wasn't only getting his head around the new processes but also explaining the switch to his industry peers. For a roaster of its size, Grinders was one of the first in Melbourne to introduce automatic roasting technology.

"A lot of my peers asked what we were doing and how we were doing it. I had to explain the advantages of the automatic systems, such as being able to develop the best roasting profiles for the different origins and replicate them for consistency," he says.

"At first, they were hesitant, but over time and once they had tried it out themselves they eventually switched over to the technology."

This kind of knowledge sharing between industry peers is something Giuseppe believes is a contributor to Australia's thriving coffee culture.

"One of the successes of the industry has been the culture inside it. Colleagues become good friends over the years," he says.

"At Grinders, we've been very lucky to be a part of the Australian café culture as it has become established. The team at Grinders are absolutely amazing. There's a huge amount of passion in everything we do – from innovating to create new blends and seeking ways to drive the coffee culture forward to partnering with relevant organisations to introduce sustainable practices in coffee. From crop to cup, Grinders is about delivering a better coffee experience for everyone."

Perfecting his craft over the past 25 years, the Master Roaster has experienced the sector's highs and lows. He says there's a lot of joy to be found in the role for those interested in a career in roasting.

"One of my favourite elements is seeing a product from start to finish. You select the raw coffee, roast, blend, taste, and then eventually sell it, which is a great feeling," he says.

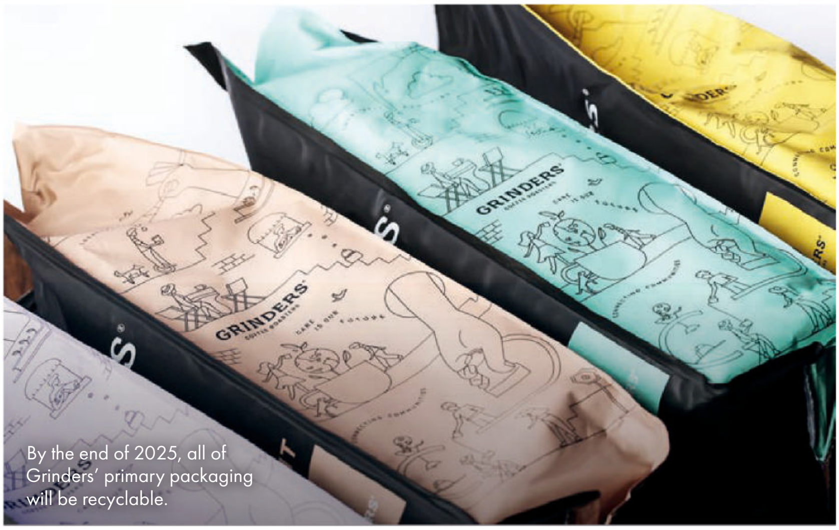
"I've also been very privileged to be able to visit some of the producers that grow our beans. Witnessing how the coffee farmers' livelihoods rely on people buying their crops pushes me to always do the best I can."

Grinders has sourced from many of its growing partners for decades, forging long lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with farmers across the coffee belt. Over the years, Giuseppe and team have been able to see first-hand the difference the roaster's partnerships have made at origin.

"We buy a lot of coffee from the same farmers and it's amazing to see the improvements. We prioritise certified coffees such as Rainforest Alliance, as certifications not only improve the quality of the coffee but also the livelihoods of the farmers and their families."

For those curious about pursuing a career in coffee roasting, Giuseppe suggests starting small.

"If you want to learn, start out by playing around with roasting profiles on a small roaster. See how you go and once you start producing some good stuff, try scaling it up on a bigger roaster," he says.



By the end of 2025, all of Grinders' primary packaging will be recyclable.

"There's great satisfaction to be found in this role. Like anything, there are challenges, but it's hugely rewarding when you see the difference your coffee is making to people's lives at origin or seeing someone enjoying the fruits of your labours here in Australia."

He says the key to the role is balancing creativity with consistency. Something that can be a difficult balance to strike for new people coming into the industry.

"You need to be inventive and innovative to create new flavour profiles, but for the company to be profitable, you also need to provide consistency for clients," he says.

"People often forget that coffee is a crop and will change naturally due to rainfall, sunlight, temperature, and other factors. One of the biggest challenges is retaining that consistency when the core product naturally fluctuates."

Giuseppe admits one of the more challenging aspects of the role of a Master Roaster is navigating industry-wide issues. Most recently, he highlights the volatile coffee market.

"At the end of 2024 we experienced the highest green coffee prices for more than 50 years, which is obviously extremely challenging. Balancing fair pay for farmers and a fair price for consumers has always been difficult, and this issue is making it even harder," he says.

Within the industry, recently there has been a lot of conversation about the cost of a cup of coffee in Australia. While many leaders are calling for price increases across the board, Giuseppe is cautious about a one-size-fits-all approach.

"We need to be thoughtful that we keep the coffee price fair across the whole supply chain. It's a complicated situation," he says.

Despite these challenges, Giuseppe says he's very positive about the future of Australia's coffee industry.

"I think what we're doing here in Australia is amazing. We have a huge variety of coffees, milks, and signature drinks that a lot of other countries don't. As both an influencer and an institution, Grinders Coffee continues to push the local coffee culture here forward," he says.

"As for the future, we have some very exciting things coming up. Beyond innovation with new blends, by the end of 2025 the primary packaging across our entire coffee range will be recyclable, which will be a great achievement for our sustainability goals.

"My personal aspiration for the company is to continue to put the same passion into our coffees. As long as you have the passion, the best product will follow."

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Images: CoffeeTools.

Tools of the trade

CoffeeTools on shaping the Australian industry, its recent rebrand, and reigniting its spark after losing a brewing icon.

In recent years, CoffeeTools has faced significant changes – not least of which was the loss of its flagship product, AeroPress, in 2024.

Yet, with a fresh rebrand and new industry-defining products, the company continues to push boundaries in the coffee space.

CoffeeTools Director Curtis Arnold has always had an instinct for spotting innovation. His keen eye for what will resonate in the market has driven the company to introduce game-changing products, such as the AeroPress in 2006, to set the stage for its continued evolution.

Curtis recalls immediately knowing the machine would make waves in the industry when he read about it in an online technology magazine, shortly after its debut at a tradeshow in late 2005.

"I knew right away that it was going to be a big success. It was an amazing coffee maker and offered incredible control over all different elements of brewing," he says.

"I immediately wrote to AeroPress. They wouldn't give me the distributorship but agreed to sell to me at wholesale. I started importing 32 to 64 units at a time by post."

Eventually, CoffeeTools received exclusive distributorship by selling to retailers for no margin while also retailing online.

"The way I saw it was that this weird plunger that didn't look like a coffee maker needed as much exposure as possible in order to have any chance of succeeding. It took a while to pick up momentum, but the rest is history," says Curtis.

From there, CoffeeTools' identity was shaped around the AeroPress, with Curtis seeking out additional complementary products to expand the company's portfolio. The drive for innovation didn't end with the AeroPress – he went on to disrupt the Australian market again with the introduction of Wacaco, a brand that would redefine portable espresso brewing.

"I backed the original Minipresso on Kickstarter and contacted them about distribution in March 2015. After a lengthy negotiation we signed an agreement and

Wacaco has been our biggest brand for quite a few years," he says.

The company now offers six different Wacaco brewers, along with a variety of models and brewing accessories such as scales, grinders, travel mugs, and glassware. But, according to Curtis, the most exciting addition to the range is the Pixapresso.

"It's a rechargeable, battery powered espresso machine that heats the water as well as pumping a perfect shot. It's incredibly compact and travel friendly. You can make espresso from fresh ground coffee or pods anywhere – just add water," he says.

Over time, CoffeeTools has expanded its product lines with additions such as Grosche, Subminimal and xBloom. The total now stands at 18 brands, most of which are exclusive to CoffeeTools in Australia.

In 2024, CoffeeTools bid farewell to its beloved AeroPress when the company was sold to a venture capital firm. With significant changes to its business model, CoffeeTools lost the Australian distribution rights to the brewer in July.

The company, born as Coffee Tools Distributing, formed its identity around the AeroPress and embedded a silhouette of the machine in its original logo. Now, the company has re-registered as CoffeeTools, dropping the brewer from its logo and 'Distributing' from its name.

But, backed by new brewing icons, it's business as usual for CoffeeTools as it looks to make a mark with the next generation of brewing technology.

"It still hurts a little when I think about losing the brand that started our business," says Curtis. "At the end of the day we can't change anything, so we're just moving forward as we always do."

In its bid to move forward, CoffeeTools is embracing the growing cultural shift towards filter coffee.

"I think there's more space for filter coffee, because it's kind of the natural progression – or evolution – of somebody's coffee journey," says Curtis. "If someone truly enjoys their coffee beyond just needing a shot of caffeine, it's the natural next step.

"You can only drink so many flat whites with two sugars. And if you start really exploring coffee and tasting all the different flavours, it's a rabbit hole that's pretty easy to fall down."

Much like the AeroPress before it, Curtis has identified the next potential game changer in the coffee industry.

"I've spent a lot of time on Kickstarter – I'm a bit obsessed with coffee gear and tech. I love backing products and seeing new innovations," he says.

While browsing the platform, Curtis came across the xBloom and it immediately piqued his interest. Curious about its potential, he brought one into the warehouse, set it up in the kitchen, and soon the whole team was using it daily.

"The more we used it, the more we grew to appreciate it, and that really motivated me to pursue the distributorship," he says.

According to Curtis, the xBloom is an asset to any brewer's inventory.

"What's great about the xBloom is its programmability. You have full control over all the variables of making a pourover and once you have it dialled in you can save the recipe to brew it the same way again and again he says.

The xBloom has a scale built into the drip tray, so users can weigh beans independently. Everything is controlled through the front panel of the machine, whether dosing for an espresso machine or measuring ingredients such as garlic for a recipe.

Moreover, the grinder has 80 adjustable settings, from coarse for cold brew to fine for espresso, and it also comes with a magnetically attached dosing cup for easy use.

"You can set the grind speed and fineness right from the controls. For the kettle, you can set the water temperature and volume, and it'll pour the exact amount needed, whether you're making tea or brewing coffee. You can even use it with other brew methods, like setting it up for an AeroPress or pourover using a V60," says Curtis.

"I struggle to imagine a better way to consistently brew fresh delicious filter coffee."

He also believes it is good value proposition, with each module able to be used independently for espresso, AeroPress, and tea, among other uses.

"If you were to buy separate high-quality scales, a grinder, and a kettle, it would cost more than the whole machine which offers incredible value for money," says Curtis.

The machine is not only an asset for producing high-quality pourovers but also serves as a unique marketing tool that can attract café-goers with its design and performance.

"When used in a café, the machine

CoffeeTools Director Curtis Arnold (left) at MICE2024.

The Wacaco Picopresso portable espresso machine.

can be positioned on the bench, where customers can watch the brewing process," says Curtis.

He says the xBloom's unique spiral water pattern and gentle agitation of the beans make it visually captivating, which catches people's attention and sparks curiosity. This, according to Curtis, is a massive opportunity for café staff to open that dialogue with interested customers.

"For many customers ordering pourover, they're already somewhat knowledgeable about coffee, so they'll likely ask about the machine," he says. "This gives the café staff the opportunity to explain how it works, the quality it delivers, and how they can even purchase the machine for home use. It's not just about serving great coffee; it's an opportunity to create a memorable experience that ties directly to product sales."

Not only can cafés generate revenue from selling premium pourovers but they can also upsell the xBloom machine as well as the coffee beans. And when a customer decides to purchase the machine, CoffeeTools makes it easy for cafés to fulfil the order.

"They don't need to keep inventory on hand. Instead, they can place an order directly with us and we'll ship it to the café or even directly to the customer's home," he says. "The best part is that we offer free shipping to the café, and a small fee for residential deliveries. This system makes it easier for cafés to drive sales without the overhead of stockpiling large machines."

He adds that by offering high-quality pourovers made with premium beans, cafés can not only enhance their menu but also create opportunities to upsell. This approach encourages customers to purchase the beans for home brewing, or even the machine itself, allowing them to replicate the café experience at home.

"It's a great way to increase revenue and build customer loyalty," says Curtis.

And a recent update enables xBloom users to store three recipes directly on the machine itself.

"The new update features Auto Mode, which is perfect for when you don't have time to tweak all the settings and steps in a new recipe," he says.

The expanded recipe library is searchable by coffee origin or roaster. This enables users to easily discover and tailor brewing methods to specific beans or preferences.

What's more, recipes can be effortlessly shared through the xBloom's inbuilt app. For example, a roaster can suggest the best way to taste their beans, friends can compare and share their brewing techniques, and cafés can consistently craft amazing pourovers for their customers with minimal effort.

"The recipe library accessible from the app gives everyone access to an endless list of recipes and a way to connect with the xBloom community too," says Curtis.

While pourovers are a popular method for serving high-quality coffee, they can be time-consuming and require a certain level of skill, which not all staff members may have – especially during peak hours. Curtis says quality can vary as a result. As a solution to this, the second-generation model – xBloom Studio –is programmable and provides a simple and efficient way for cafés to consistently offer pourover coffee without compromising on quality

"With the xBloom, you're able to offer a consistently excellent pourover every time. The machine ensures each cup is as good as the last, something even a skilled barista might struggle to achieve when making multiple pourovers in a rush," says Curtis.

"The machine is programmed to deliver repeatable, high-quality results – just dose your beans, hit a button, and walk away. You can focus on serving other customers or preparing other drinks, while the xBloom Studio handles the pourover perfectly."

For the CoffeeTools team, Curtis says their commitment to quality goes beyond just the products they offer. Their deep passion for coffee drives them to be highly selective about the brands and products they distribute, ensuring only the best options make it into their portfolio.

"We talk about coffee constantly, drink a lot of it, and we're always reading about it – not just for work but for our own personal interest," says Curtis.

He says it's more than just a job: it's something the team genuinely cares about. They see themselves as coffee enthusiasts, passionate about the commodity and constantly eager to learn more about every aspect of it.

"We're always reading about and researching gear and brew methods for our own enjoyment. Every now and again we come across something that looks like it might fit nicely into our portfolio of products and we reach out to the company," says Curtis.

"Having been around for a long time and with quite a few brands under our belt, we also get manufacturers reaching out to us about distributing their products, but we're very selective about what we carry. We don't just sell anything that comes our way. We only choose products that we genuinely like, believe in, and think have a real place in the market."

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Images: The Bean Cartel.

Head Roaster Alan Chan says being able to detect key flavour profiles is an essential skill to the role.

Chan-do attitude

The Bean Cartel's Alan Chan reveals what it takes to be a Master Roaster, the key to training your palate, and what it's like to sweep the floor at industry awards.

Alan Chan was destined for a career as an accountant until he pulled out of his university course, retreated to the hospitality industry in which he'd grown up, and found his way into coffee.

Fast-forward almost two decades and he's now a multi-award-winning Master Roaster at one of Australia's fastest growing specialty companies. Yet, his path to achieving his dream role as a roaster wasn't always easy.

"Growing up in a traditional Asian family, it was expected that I'd become a doctor, lawyer, accountant, or something along those lines," Alan says.

"At the age of 20, I was studying accounting, commerce, and law at university but after two years it was killing me. I couldn't handle spending so much time on a subject my heart wasn't really in. Eventually, I switched to hospitality management as it was something I knew well and enjoyed."

From an early age, Alan had been a part of Australia's bustling hospitality industry. His parents had established Chinese restaurants in both Sydney and Melbourne, and while he was studying he worked at a local Japanese eatery. At the end of his hospitality course, he gained a role at Hilton on the Park in Melbourne and worked his way up the ranks.

"After just under five years at Hilton, a friend of mine in the coffee industry offered me a role as a barista at their café. I'd recently become interested in latte art competitions – Australia had just won a few world titles back-to-back – and I wanted to get more serious about coffee, which had become my hobby," he says.

Over the next couple of years, Alan built up his barista skills at a few venues across Melbourne. When he wasn't working, he was training to compete in barista throwdowns and other latte art competitions.

"I've always been into competitions because I'm quite competitive. Being a barista meant I could learn from the best and practise consistently," he says.

After winning several local latte art competitions, his extra-curricular activities broadened to include roasting. In the late 2000s, there weren't many roasting schools around so he taught himself the trade, at first on an air roaster and then upgrading to a Behmor.

"At the time, coffee roasting at home was pretty old school. I bought my green beans online and had to do all my own research on development, roasting to different degrees, and letting it age," he says.

"I was winning a few latte art competitions and wanted my roasting abilities to match my barista skills. By this point, my career goal was to become a header roaster, so I was accumulating as much knowledge as possible."

In 2010, Alan turned his hobby into his profession when he landed a roasting role at Coffee Hit in Melbourne. After polishing his skills at several specialist roasters, in 2019 he became Master Roaster of The Bean Cartel. He now oversees the growing specialty roaster's vast roster of blends and single origins, as well as hosting barista and latte art workshops from the Notting Hill headquarters.

For those thinking of a career in roasting, Alan says the role is extremely rewarding.

"I love that I get to work with people from all walks of life, not just my colleagues and the venues we supply but also the green bean merchants and the farmers themselves," he says.

"I also love working with the coffee. Every harvest, each single origin is different from the last and over the past three years we've witnessed so much innovation and experimentation with things such as fermentation and carbonic maceration."

He does warn the role isn't all fun and experimentation, however.

"A lot of baristas who want to go into roasting ask me how to make the move and I'm always honest with them that sometimes it can be a bit boring. Once you've achieved the desired roast curve, you have to replicate it day in, day out," he says.

"You've got to be very interested in coffee and learning about the roasting process to get the best out of the role."

Factors outside a roaster's control, such as market volatility and extreme weather events, can also impact the role. He says that, since COVID-19, it's become increasingly difficult to source some of the coffees he'd like to work with.

"There's been a bit of a domino effect. Multiple factors have impacted the market, so sourcing green beans is a lot more difficult. Demand is growing yet the supply isn't there, therefore prices have gone through the roof," he says.

"For us, the difficulty is sourcing the best quality beans and then trying to pass a small fraction of that additional cost to our customers. Thankfully, many of them have been very understanding."

Being able to cup coffees and detect key flavour profiles is an essential skill required from roasters. According to Alan, one of the best things you can do to improve your cupping skills is broadening your palate.

"My advice for baristas who want to improve their cupping is to experience a lot of different flavour profiles. Eat a wide range of cuisines with a variety of flavours, such as Thai, Indian, and Korean," he says.

"Even just trying different varieties of apples will deliver a whole spectrum of flavours."

When it comes to roasting, Alan's favourite origin to work with is Colombia as he says the coffee beans are one of the easiest to roast and produce a mind-blowing flavour profile. Decafs, however, are a lot trickier.

"Decaf coffee can be harder to roast as, unlike most regular coffees, you can't roast by colour because of the decaffeination process. Generally, you have to roast a bit darker, but you don't want it to burn. You also don't want to under roast it either as it would be sour and under extracted," he says.

Alan's roasting prowess was catapulted into the limelight in October 2024 when The Bean Cartel was awarded eight medals in the Golden Bean Australasia awards. While the roaster had collected the accolades in previous years, he was thrilled to have won gold for Dr Chan's Seasonal Blend in the Milk-Based category.

"The Milk-Based category is the most coveted, because 95 per cent of the population in Australia drink coffee with milk," he says.

"They announce the winner of this category last. I was stunned when they called out our coffee. We had already won seven medals, but this was the cherry on top."

While The Bean Cartel team are thrilled with their sweep of awards, Alan's competitive nature means he has his sights set on the top title: Golden Bean Overall Champion.

"Winning the Milk-Based category was great, but the next step is Overall Champion," he says. "To have the highest score of all the competitors that year would validate my hard work and dedication for coffee." ◘

For more information, visit thebeancartel.com.au

THE BEAN CARTEL
Dr Chan's Xmas Blend
Dr Chan's

The Bean Cartel recently scooped eight medals at the Golden Bean awards.

Images: La Marzocco.

Since establishing its first Australian branch in Melbourne in 2014, La Marzocco has also opened a showroom in Sydney.

A decade Down Under

Ten years on from the launch of La Marzocco Australia, Managing Director Barry Moore reflects on the brand's journey and shares its future vision for the world's most iconic coffee market.

La Marzocco is one of the coffee industry's most prominent brands. Walk into a specialty coffee shop in any city in the world and there's a good chance there'll be a Linea model on the bench. People who love coffee but have never given the industry a second thought recognise the brand's heraldic lion logo guarding each machine, often snapping pictures of kaleidoscopic custom editions for the perfect coffee shop aesthetic.

It's not all about looks, though. The Italian manufacturer is celebrated for its quality, longevity and performance, making it well-respected by baristas, café owners, roasters, and coffee aficionados around the world.

At its Australian headquarters in Melbourne, every machine imported from the La Marzocco factory in Florence is meticulously tested to ensure it's working at full capacity before it makes its way to its new home, whether in a café, a business, or, increasingly, a coffee lover's kitchen.

According to La Marzocco Australia Managing Director Barry Moore, the brand's success in Australia is down, in part, to a series of serendipitous events.

"The story starts with the adoption of La Marzocco by Starbucks in the United States (US) during the 1980s through Kent Bakke, La Marzocco's former CEO, who was building machines in Seattle to support the rapid growth of the chain," says Barry.

"A few years later, while visiting Florence, Michael Allpress convinced our then-President Piero Bambi to sell him a machine when founding the Allpress Espresso coffee business in New Zealand. Michael was so passionate about the quality of the machinery that Allpress acted as a La Marzocco distributor in Australia and New Zealand for many years.

Although unrelated, Barry believes these two key events drove La Marzocco's continued journey of innovation and partnership.

"La Marzocco perfected building resilient twin-boiler machinery that could deliver high-volume coffee and steamed milk at scale in the US, while also working with New Zealand and Australia's passionate artisan coffee pioneers to refine espresso and milk-based coffee drinks originally introduced to the region by Italian migrants in the 1950s," he says.

Coffee-focussed businesses in Australia benefitted from this established model of support and access to technicians and spare parts, which ensured they could serve customers without downtime. Coffee quickly evolved from traditional Italian-style espresso and cappuccino drinks to the Australian flat white, now enjoyed in cafés around the world.

It wasn't just the functionality and reliability of the machines gaining the brand traction: the design was also turning heads across Australia, underpinned by an enthusiasm for building life-long relationships and listening to the coffee community.

Barry believes the brand's roots in Italy set a benchmark for its relationship-driven culture, coupled with its iconic designs.

"The Bambi brothers who founded La Marzocco were born and raised in Florence – one of the most beautiful places on Earth – and this environment had a huge influence on them. Piero Bambi studied textile design before pivoting into espresso machines, so he always had an incredible eye for design," he says.

The look of the machines struck a note here as they complemented what is now the iconic Australian coffee shop aesthetic. Café owners were designing spaces that appealed visually, and a La Marzocco on the bench continues to be part of many successful venues' must-haves.

In the early 2010s, the espresso machines were proving so successful in the region that the Italian head office decided to establish a local branch office. In 2014, La Marzocco Australia opened on the corner of Nicholson Street in Abbotsford, Melbourne – the same venue the team operate out of today.

Since the launch of the branch office, La Marzocco Australia has grown from a sales, marketing, and distribution hub into a sophisticated 360-degree service provider to support the local coffee industry.

"The space is multifaceted, with areas for bench testing our machines, training technicians, dispatching spare parts, demonstrating new technologies, and hosting the local coffee community," Barry says.

Over the past 10 years, La Marzocco's global purpose has remained the same: to build relationships that enrich people's lives through the manufacturing of high-quality specialty coffee equipment. Locally, the team has expanded to open a Sydney space and, in 2020, partnered with service company Brewtech to provide national servicing.

Barry says one of the most prominent shifts in the industry has been the growth of the home market following the pandemic. To adapt to the home coffee boom, La Marzocco now has a home retail area in both destinations, where coffee lovers can road-test models such as the flagship Linea Mini, the petite Linea Micra, and the newly released Pico home grinder.

"When the Australian office opened, there was a huge surge in the specialty market in the café sector. Now, quality coffee has gone mainstream and people expect to find it everywhere, not just in cafés – from leading workplaces and sporting venues to luxury car showrooms and retail stores," he says.

Looking to the future of the business, sustainability is a priority.

"We truly stand by our 'built to last, supported for life' commitment. Over time, we have focused on creating a truly sustainable circular solution, so that our partners can get the absolute most out of our machinery, in a way that sustains our industry and our environment," says Barry.

The Australian team believes that buying second-hand, or revitalising older machinery, isn't a compromise. Through sister company Brewtech, machines can be refurbished – inside and out – to keep them out in the field for a lifetime.

Barry emphasises that this green model also creates more jobs for technicians, a segment of the industry he believes is often overlooked and undervalued.

"Along with rightly celebrating the amazing skills of roasters and baristas, technicians are also heroes of our industry. Without them, cafés couldn't continue to function," he says.

"Through Brewtech we are creating structured career pathways for those who love the mechanical side of the machines as much as the coffee."

Alongside a circular economy focus, La Marzocco will continue to innovate with new products to serve the evolving needs of the coffee sector.

"Via Internet of Things (IoT) capability within our machines, La Marzocco is currently testing a connected machinery system, which gives different stakeholders across the community the ability to see what's going on via the cloud, all in the name of a better cup of coffee," says Barry.

Data-driven insights from equipment analytics give roasters and service providers the ability to monitor their fleet remotely and ensure everything is running smoothly. The aim is to increase consistency and quality, while spotting potential issues early to reduce downtime and get a technician to site more efficiently.

Early testing indicates time-saving opportunities for roasters, which allow them to invest time where it's needed most in their business.

More broadly, Barry is committed to ensuring La Marzocco Australia remains ingrained in the coffee community.

"Above all, we are here to support our partners. Our spaces in Melbourne and Sydney are community spaces where they can host events, trial machinery configurations, and train their café partners," he says.

"As a manufacturer, to have a connection to the coffee community in a market like this is something very special. We feel privileged to be part of it and are ready for what the next decade brings." ◘

For more information, visit au.lamarzocco.com

La Marzocco

The look of the machines struck a note with Australian café owners as they complemented what is now the iconic Australian coffee shop aesthetic.

Through sister company Brewtech, machines can be refurbished to keep them out in the field for a lifetime.

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Steeped in experience

Lance Witham on celebrating 30 years in the industry, the key to longevity, and how Witham's empowers independent cafés.

Coffee is in Lance Witham's DNA. Born on his family's coffee farm in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands, his childhood was spent climbing tea chests and coffee sacks, and exploring coffee plantations.

After moving to Australia in 1983 and working with his dad in the industry, Lance completed a stint on coffee farms in Far North Queensland before returning to work for a boutique roaster in Sydney, where he learned how to roast and retail coffee. Eighteen months later, Witham's Coffee was born, opening its doors on 24 February 1995 with the first sale, ironically, a hot chocolate.

The roaster, now established in Hornsby, Sydney, is entrenched in its local community. Alongside the roastery is an espresso bar and showroom where customers can watch the roasting process while enjoying a coffee in the adjacent café.

With close ties to local businesses, Witham's has grown to become a trusted ally for small businesses and start-up cafés, offering adaptability and flexibility to help them thrive.

"We've been in the trenches ourselves – starting with a tiny café with a roaster in the corner," says Lance.

"I worked seven days a week for 12 years, so I know what it's like to have customers staring you down from the other side of the coffee machine."

This industry experience and understanding means Lance and team often go the extra mile for their clients, such as on one occasion, roasting on a Sunday and driving down to Bowral to make sure their coffee arrived on time.

"It's not just about the product, although it's important to us to offer outstanding, consistent coffee at a great price. But what really sets us apart is that we only roast to order," he says.

"When you place an order with us, it goes into the production schedule for that day. The cut-off time is around 10.30am, and we roast and pack the coffee that morning. We then deliver it either that afternoon or the following morning – always within 24 hours. This means our café customers have fresh coffee that's always within a three- to 10-day window."

Even though he admits this can be a logistical challenge, the team manages to get the coffee to most places – including Tasmania and Queensland – within a couple of days.

"That's our point of difference: freshly roasted, consistently delivered coffee, straight to our customers' doors," says Lance.

With the economic downturn and industry shifts, Lance says he's noticed many café owners who used to order larger quantities are now opting for smaller amounts more frequently. He believes they're cutting down their stock to ensure they don't over-order. In response, Witham's has adapted.

"We pride ourselves on being a one-stop shop for all the products a café needs, but it's our willingness to work with the buying patterns of smaller independent cafés that really makes the difference. We don't impose minimum order quantities or focus solely on the large players. For years, our bread and butter has been working with start-up cafés, helping them grow and develop their businesses," says Lance.

With a call-sheet system, the company aims to relieve some of the pressure off its wholesale customers by calling at a regular, set time to take an order.

"Some of our customers know exactly when Kym [Customer Relationship Manager] will call, and when they pick up the phone, they say, 'Hi, Kym, how's it going?'," he says.

Lance believes beverage consistency is crucial for cafés to stand out, which is why Witham's provides in-depth barista training to ensure quality and differentiation.

He explains that while at an establishment one weekend, he ordered the same coffee during breakfast on both mornings but received two completely different beverages.

"It really highlights how much room there is for improvement in terms of consistency. There's a need for managers and owners to focus on creating a consistent standard," says Lance.

"I've always said when you give 10 chefs the same ingredients you'll end up with 10 different meals, and one of them will probably be sublime. The challenge then is figuring out what made that one meal stand out. Alternatively, if you give them a clear recipe, you might get a more consistent outcome across all 10."

The key, especially in coffee, is providing a system and training that focuses on achieving consistency. Lance says some of the best baristas he's worked with didn't drink coffee when they started, because it's all about following the process and understanding the ratios to creating great coffee.

Lance Witham (pictured) says Witham's Coffee prides itself on relationships with smaller independent cafés. Image: Witham's Coffee.

This focus on process and consistency has been a cornerstone of Witham's success, even in challenging times. Throughout the years, Witham's has gotten creative when riding the waves of economic downturn.

For example, diversification played a key role for Witham's during the global financial crash. Lance says a friend of his had a business selling frozen meals, mainly to aged care facilities, and Witham's ended up becoming a courier service for him.

"You have to be flexible and open-minded in tough times, which is how we're navigating the current cost-of-living crisis," says Lance. "We've seen these challenges before and we've survived. Now, we're looking forward to the next 30 years." ◘

For more information, visit withams.com.au

Images: Prime Creative Media.

MICE takes place from 20 to 22 March in the heart of Melbourne.

MICE up your life

Melbourne International Coffee Expo returns in March with its largest lineup of roasters, educational content, awards, and more. Here's what to expect from the must-attend coffee event.

Coffee is an industry like no other. There are elements of competition and business challenges, but there's also an underlying understanding of community, collaboration, and camaraderie. At events like Melbourne International Coffee Expo (MICE), the global coffee industry comes together to share knowledge, discuss ideas, discover new brands, and – most importantly – catch up over a coffee.

From 20 to 22 March, MICE will welcome the international coffee community to Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre for three days of fun, education, business, and collaboration. And this year, there's more exciting events to get stuck into than ever before.

COME TO PLAY

Fresh for MICE2025 is the Roasters Playground, which will see more than 50 roasters dishing out coffees and hosting tasting sessions across the event. Supported by La Marzocco, Riverina Fresh, and Milklab, the new area gives attendees the opportunity to discover a whole host of roasters they might not have come across and try a kaleidoscope of coffees.

Roasters Playground sponsor La Marzocco will provide all the equipment for the roasters to craft excellent coffee, while Riverina Fresh and Milklab will supply dairy and alt-milks for the baristas to rustle up delicious drinks for attendees. The roasters will change throughout the day, so attendees will have a rolling selection of beans to sample and brands to engage with.

"What you can expect from this edition of MICE is a show curated around some of Australia's best roasters," says La Marzocco Australia Managing Director Barry Moore.

"The diversity of the show enables coffee roasters to engage with a broader range of businesses attending than ever before. Leaders are there to learn how integrating coffee as part of the customer experience can grow their respective businesses. I truly believe the Australian coffee and hospitality industry is on its very own frontier, and we will witness this at MICE2025."

What's more, there'll be even more bean action taking place at the Roasters Village, where attendees can get to know some of Australia's best-loved roasters across the three days. Expect a full lineup of immersive events, barista showcases, interactive tastings, and more.

COME TO LEARN

Responding to the industry's call for more knowledge-sharing opportunities, education is a key focus for MICE2025. Building on its sold-out panel discussion sessions in 2024, the 12th edition of the event will feature even more opportunities to learn and pick up new skills.

The free-to-attend Café Owners Education Series will return with an extended program, covering essential topics such as coffee pricing, staff shortages, menu curation, and navigating social media. The Global Coffee Report Breakfast Symposium will feature international speakers, with tickets available to purchase in advance from the MICE website.

Abdullah Ramay, CEO of Pablo & Rusty's Coffee Roasters, is one of this year's Café Owners Education Series panellists.

"Leaders in the coffee industry have two key roles: to share an exciting vision for the future and to help others get there. The incredible coffee culture we enjoy today is thanks to the hard work of those who came before us. It's now our turn to think differently, challenge the status quo, and shape the coffee industry for the better," he says.

"That's where MICE's education series really shines. It brings people together to share ideas, learn from one another, and map out the future of both Australian and global coffee."

While Australia might be a small market, Abdullah believes it's a global leader when it comes to coffee culture, especially espresso-based beverages.

"MICE has the potential to be more than just an event; it could be the heartbeat of the global coffee community," he says.

"It's a space where we can share stories, learn from each other, and tackle the challenges we're all facing as an industry."

In addition to the panel discussions, a new Demo Stage will give attendees the opportunity to learn new skills firsthand. The sessions are designed for both home enthusiasts and people in the industry and will cover a wide variety of topics – from tutorials on steaming non-dairy milk to how to become a world-class barista.

COME TO DO BUSINESS

For years, MICE has been a unique opportunity to do business face to face. To reflect its role as a facilitator of collaboration and partnerships, for the 2025 event organisers have introduced the Melbourne Coffee Festival and Espresso Bar.

The interactive new space for attendees and exhibitors to relax and connect will serve coffee in the mornings. In the afternoons, DJs and drinks will create a more lively, social vibe.

Simon Zhang, Overseas Marketing Specialist at MHW-3BOMBER, says the specialty coffee wares provider based in China sees MICE as a chance to connect with international buyers.

"Tradeshows like MICE are crucial to the coffee industry. They are not only platforms for showcasing new ideas, innovations, and technologies but also vital venues for communication and collaboration within the industry," he says.

More than 10,000 visitors are expected to attend MICE2025.

"MICE offers us the opportunity to connect with professional café owners, roasters, equipment manufacturers, and service providers. The reputation and influence of MICE aligns perfectly with our target market."

COME TO CELEBRATE

MICE2025 will not only host the popular Product Innovation and Australia's Favourite Coffee awards but also the inaugural Coffee Industry Heroes honours. The new awards recognise those in the coffee and café industry who have displayed commitment and made positive impacts towards their craft, the industry, and the people around them.

"We are so thrilled to introduce the first ever Coffee Industry Heroes awards," says Lauren Chartres, MICE Show Director.

"There are so many unsung heroes who go above and beyond every day for their community, colleagues, and the wider Australian coffee industry. This is a unique opportunity to give them the recognition they deserve."

Nominated by the public and decided by an independent jury, the Coffee Industry Heroes will crown three winners in Community Champion, Next-Gen Talent, and Lifetime Achievement categories. The results will be revealed at the Official MICE After-Party, held at Showtime Events on Saturday 22 March.

After the awards ceremony, which will be open to anyone in the industry, the MICE After-Party will be in full swing at the same venue. Everyone's invited to mingle with fellow coffee folk, celebrate the winners, and raise an espresso martini to MICE2025. Tickets can be purchased in advance from the MICE website. ◼

MICE2025 takes place at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre from 20 to 22 March 2025. Tickets are expected to sell out, so purchase yours now from internationalcoffeeexpo.com

More than 50 roasters will be showcasing their beans at the 2025 event.

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Roasting with purpose

For Nomad Coffee Group, success isn't just about perfecting a blend – it's also about putting its people first.

Image: Veneziano.

Nomad Coffee Group achieved the globally recognised Great Place to Work Certification.

At Nomad Coffee Group, every cup of coffee brewed tells a story of dedication, innovation, and connection. But it's the stories of the people behind the beans that make the company stand out among the crowd. For Nomad, success isn't just about crafting award-winning roasts: it's also about creating a workplace where individuals can thrive, grow, and make a lasting impact.

The team knows how to roast an award-winning blend and craft a fan-favourite single origin. But for this collective of people and brands, success begins from within. Nomad believes great coffee can make a difference in the everyday, and its family of brands – Veneziano Coffee Roasters, Coffee Hit, Black Bag Roasters, and Flight Coffee – reflects this shared purpose. Together, they're united by a commitment to exceptional coffee and the people who make it possible.

This people-first philosophy recently earned Nomad Coffee Group the globally recognised Great Place to Work Certification – said to be the gold standard for workplace culture. It is based on anonymous employee feedback and an evaluation of trust, respect, fairness, pride, and camaraderie.

"For us, it's not just a badge," says Amie Jacobson, Human Resources Director. "It's proof that we've created a space where individuals feel valued, supported, and empowered. It shows that we're not just talking about being a great workplace, we're living it."

Nomad's culture is built on nurturing long-term careers, with many employees beginning in roles such as roasting, customer service, or barista positions. Over time, team members have grown into leadership roles such as Head of Procurement, Customer Experience Manager, Demand Planner, and Finance Manager.

"Seeing people grow and succeed here is the most rewarding part of my role," says Amie.

"Some employees have become well-known names in the industry, while others have returned after pursuing opportunities elsewhere. That loyalty and continuity show we're doing something right."

At Nomad, Amie says leadership is all about collaboration, empowerment, and rolling up your sleeves. Leaders are frequently seen stepping in to support the team when needed – whether it's Founder Rocky Veneziano carrying plates at a café or other leaders joining the packing line during busy periods.

"Our leaders genuinely care, showing through their actions that every team member matters," says Amie.

'They're not afraid to step in to support our teams and they do so on a regular basis. This ethos creates a supportive culture, and we often see people lending a hand to other teams."

She adds that employee feedback isn't just encouraged at Nomad, it's a driving force behind the company's continuous improvement.

Regular engagement surveys and an open-door policy ensure every voice is heard, with leaders held accountable for acting on feedback.

"There's a deep belief here that the best ideas often come from those closest to the action, which are the people on the ground, doing the job," says Amie.

"Our leaders are always open to a coffee chat with any employee, regardless of their role."

This approach is complemented by Nomad's focus on wellbeing.

From hybrid work options, wellness workshops, and mental health resources to superannuation education sessions and flexibility when it comes to annual leave, the company is constantly looking to evolve its workplace culture.

"We also run initiatives like community-volunteering events, mindfulness programs, and even simple things like encouraging people to actually take their leave and purchasing additional leave throughout the year to take that six-week European holiday if they like, and longer leave if they wish to do so," she says.

"We're constantly evolving our workplace culture to support our people, both at work and in life. We prioritise wellbeing in every sense."

Amie says the Great Place to Work Certification puts an official stamp on what Nomad's people already express through their words and actions: that Nomad is a great place to work.

"It's a place where multifaceted careers are built, people thrive, and leaders demonstrate genuine care for their teams," she says.

As Nomad Coffee Group grows, its focus remains on preserving the close-knit culture and core values that have defined its success.

"At Nomad, we're building more than a workplace," says Amie.

"We're creating a legacy of care, innovation, and connection that fuels not just our coffee but also our people."

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Emma McDougall is the Communications and Administration Coordinator of the NZSCA.

2024 Aotearoa Barista Champion Max Cui receiving his trophy from 2023 Champion Honoka Kawashima. Image: Andrew Turner of ATPhoto.

All in this together

Emma McDougall reflects on the NZSCA's achievements over the past year and the power of collaboration.

2024 was a year of milestones, innovation, and collaboration that strengthened our community and showcased our collective passion on a global stage. From launching the Regionals and progressing energy reports to hosting our Championship events, we've proven the power of coming together.

Our accomplishments reached new heights. In April, Han Jong Lee competed in the World Cup Tasters Championship in Chicago, United States, earning an outstanding third place with a flawless performance – a feat of true skill and precision. In May, Honoka Kawashima represented us at the World Barista Championships, achieving an incredible fourth-place finish. Her performance inspired us all, showing the world the talent, dedication, and passion that define our small but mighty community.

In August, we crowned new Cup Taster's Champion Dove Chen, a two-time NZ Barista Champion, and Bryan Rejayya, our Latte Art Champion. Both Hamiltonians will proudly represent Aotearoa in the worlds in Geneva in 2025. October brought the Aotearoa Barista Champs, in which Max Cui took the top spot after an impressive second-place finish in the Wellington Regionals. The calibre of talent on stage was exceptional, and every competitor did themselves and their companies proud.

These successes serve as a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when we dream big and work together. They also highlight the importance of engagement, collaboration, and participation. Whether you've always dreamed of competing or simply want to be part of this vibrant community, now is the perfect time to get involved. From entering competitions to supporting events, your contributions matter and make a real difference.

If you're considering standing for the board, this is your chance to shape the future of our community. By stepping into a leadership role, you can help drive key initiatives, make strategic decisions, and champion the mission we all share. Or perhaps you know someone whose impact deserves to be celebrated – a community legend whose contributions have left a lasting imprint. Now is the time to nominate them for a Recognition Award and shine a spotlight on their achievements at the AGM in Hastings in May.

We also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who made 2024 so remarkable. To our members, competitors, sponsors, and supporters: your energy, creativity, and dedication made every success possible. Every event, every gathering, and every moment of connection was enriched by your contributions.

Looking ahead, 2025 is shaping up to be an exciting year filled with opportunities to connect, learn, and grow together. We're proud to have created a calendar of events designed to engage, inspire, and expand our community. Whether you're a competitor aiming to showcase your skills, a coffee enthusiast wanting to get involved, or someone ready to step into a leadership role, we can't wait to see what you'll bring to the presentation or judges' table.

Let's raise a cup (maybe a brewer's cup) to a fantastic year ahead – one filled with bold brews, shared passions, and deeper connections to what's in your cup and the hands that brought it to you. ◘

For more information on the New Zealand Specialty Coffee Association, or to join, visit nzsca.org

Coffee with purpose

Bodacious Coffee on the power of small, positive actions to create lasting change and how focusing on local communities can spark a ripple effect of good.

Bodacious Coffee Director Justin Metcalf says the company culture is centred on giving back to its local community.

Boda
la marzocco

Images: Bodacious Coffee.

The philosophy at Melbourne roaster Bodacious Coffee goes beyond simply crafting a great cup: it's about creating meaningful solutions that respond to the evolving landscape of coffee production.

Company Director Justin Metcalf says the name embodies boldness and audacity, reflecting its approach to coffee. Historically, he says Bodacious has always used stronger, more robust beans with a focus on providing everyday, "bread-and-butter" coffee.

"This is why we chose the name Bodacious, to reflect that bold, unapologetic approach to the coffee we offer," he says.

But the hallmark of the company isn't the coffee it roasts but rather the culture it has built over the course of its 16 years, within both its employee structure and the community it serves.

"Everyone here has a voice and is involved in every aspect of the business. As the owner, my focus is on making sure everyone feels valued, happy, and respected," says Justin. "The ethos of Bodacious is all about respect – the respect we give to the bean and to the people who work here."

In a competitive market, Bodacious doesn't adopt a traditional competitive mindset. Instead, Justin says it focuses on building synergies with the industry's big players.

Over the years, he's watched those he's worked with carve out their own niches and offered support in areas like barista training and early-stage guidance. In return, they've occasionally helped Bodacious with roasting coffee.

Justin explains that this led to a natural progression of long-term friendships and professional relationships. For him, true success lies in the partnerships he's formed.

"From our point of view, we've built our own niche," he says. "We've developed a business model and strategic plan that works for us. It's not about battling against other coffee companies; we've chosen a different approach. We focus on our own community and market, where we've created a space for ourselves."

For example, as a board member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Coffee Federation and Director and Chief Education Officer of the ASEAN Federation Institute, he's had the opportunity to form numerous connections and partnerships. Justin explains that the company's approach has been to support and grow the market in Southeast Asia and, in turn, this strategy has benefited his business as well.

"We've used the ASEAN Coffee Federation model as a foundation and now we're focusing on bringing that same mindset back to our local community," he says.

Although this international support is crucial, he says it's just as important to focus on the company's own backyard.

"If you look at us from a broader perspective, we certainly talk a lot about what we can do in the coffee world – supporting farmers, purchasing coffee, and all of that. But we also ask, 'Why not look at how we can help our local community too?' That's a big part of our company culture now: engaging with our community, understanding what people need, and finding ways to support them," says Justin.

"I'm in a great position to say, 'I am where I am now', and I want to start giving back to our local area. There are people in our community who are struggling to put food on the table, and that's something we want to address."

As a result, Bodacious is increasing its mobility and using its coffee van to connect with people, listen to their needs, and discover ways to offer support.

“We’ve also started a program where a portion of the proceeds from each cup of coffee goes towards funding meals for people in our area who are struggling,” he says.

“It’s about making a tangible difference locally, and it’s something that’s becoming more and more central to our work.”

Currently, one of the roaster’s main partners is Foothills Community Care, a not-for-profit grassroots organisation that provides meals to those in need in outer-east Melbourne.

“They have a wonderful mantra: ‘Everyone is welcome at our table’,” says Justin.

“What really inspired us to get involved is the way they approach community care. It’s not just about providing a free meal on the nights they serve but also creating a space for people – particularly those with disabilities, the elderly, or those who are isolated and lonely – to come together, share a meal, have a chat, or just enjoy a coffee.

“More and more people in the community are getting to know us, understanding what we do, and supporting our efforts. In many ways, the support we’re giving back to the community is also coming back to us. It’s a two-way street, and it’s been great to see that mutual support growing.”

As the market continues to shift, Bodacious is impacted by factors beyond its control, such as rising coffee prices. However, Justin believes one thing within the team’s control is their mindset and how the company chooses to respond to these challenges.

“I’m not going to say ‘Poor us’ because we’re paying over three US dollars per pound for coffee. Instead, I say, ‘Okay, we’re all in this together’,” he says.

“Let’s figure out how we can help people, accept the situation for what it is, and choose to approach it with a positive mindset. I always tell my staff that we have the power to choose how we speak, how we act, and how we do business with others. It’s all about making positive choices, and from our perspective, we choose to make a positive impact.”

Bodacious also gives back to the coffee community through its range of education programs, supporting the next generation of coffee professionals. Leveraging Justin’s role as Director of Education with the ASEAN Coffee Institute, Bodacious has developed its own tailored programs.

“We have Level 1 and Level 2 courses in place, and Level 3 is about to launch,” he says.

We’ve also created what we call the A Grader program, which is not so much a direct competition to the Q Grader but rather a certification focused on the quality of Asian coffees, rather than African, Central American, or South American coffees.”

He adds that the ASEAN Coffee Federation, with his assistance, has developed a new coffee flavour wheel tailored to the tastes, aromas, and flavours of Asian coffees.

“What sets us apart is that our training room is fully accredited by the ASEAN Coffee Institute, which gives us official certification and recognition for the courses we offer. It’s a unique point of difference for us,” says Justin.

Looking to the future, Bodacious aims to continue contributing to its local community and become more involved in activities beyond its current engagements. Justin also hopes to inspire more roasters and industry professionals to take small, tangible steps towards local participation, emphasising that it’s not just about big moves – small actions can make a meaningful impact.

“If I could offer one piece of advice to other roasters and coffee lovers, it would be this: think about your family, your community, and how you can make a positive impact locally,” he says.

“There’s so much opportunity to make a real difference right here at home. That’s something I hope the coffee industry as a whole starts thinking about more – small, positive steps that contribute to our local communities. It’s more sustainable in the long run, and it can create a ripple effect of good.”

For more information, visit bodaciouscoffee.com.au

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Images: Lavazza.

All of Lavazza Australia's coffees are subjected to 39 tests and trials before leaving the Melbourne roastery.

The extra mile

How Lavazza Australia goes above and beyond to ensure its coffees are safe, consistent, and remain delicious for as long as possible.

In the development of Mosaic, a bespoke range of blends finely tuned for the Australian palate, Lavazza National Training Managers Nick Ferrara and Peter Dorkota knew they'd have to go above and beyond to create a collection of coffees that meet the high standards of the country's discerning flat white and long black drinkers.

It's an ethos that's deeply imbedded in the brand. Coffee is only required to pass one test before it can be sold in Australia, yet every bean that passes through Lavazza's Melbourne roastery is subjected to 39. The process is time consuming and costly, but for the team at Lavazza it's nonnegotiable.

The trials, which range from heavy metals and chemical testing to packaging standards, were first adopted by Lavazza in Italy in line with European Union (EU) requirements. While the EU only calls for 17 of these tests, the company introduced 22 of its own – such as x-ray screening and dust removal – to ensure its products are consistent and standards remain high.

Nick says that although the company isn't required to do the same testing in Australia, it also endeavours to supply its customers across the country with coffee of the highest possible quality.

"We don't have to do these Quality Standard tests by law, but we have made it a core part of our process because we strive to create the best product," he says.

"Only batches that meet our standards leave the warehouse. Some of the tests are done by independent laboratories before the green beans reach our Melbourne roastery, which allow us to reject any coffee that doesn't make the grade."

As part of this set of trials, Lavazza Australia's storing, roasting, and bagging process has been fully mechanised to minimise the risk of contamination. Nitrogen flushing of the beans before they are bagged has also been added to the workflow to keep the coffee fresher for longer.

"Once the coffee has been roasted, the beans are flushed with nitrogen to remove all oxygen before bagging. Oxidation of the beans degrades the flavour and aroma of the coffee," says Nick.

"From our research, we've found nitrogen flushing not only increases the freshness of the beans for longer but also improves the consistency of the final product, making the barista's job easier."

Nick explains that coffee that hasn't been nitrogen flushed will reach peak flavour around 15 days post roast, but will then quickly start to degrade. Nitrogen flushed coffee, on the other hand, will also reach peak flavour around day 15 but will stay around that level for longer before declining gradually.

"This means when baristas add another bag to the hopper, which may have been roasted on a different day to the beans used in the previous batch, they shouldn't have to tweak the extraction parameters mid service. The flavour and quality of the coffee throughout the day will be consistent," he says.

While these Quality Control tests are standard across all Lavazza coffees, the Australian team introduced two extra trials in the creation of its new Mosaic range.

"In the development phase of the Mosaic blends, we introduced a solubility test. This was implemented to identify beans from a large pool of options that roast well together," he says.

"Blending different beans with similar solubility means we could tweak the recipe as we wanted to create the desired flavour. These coffees naturally work well together, which also benefits the barista when creating the end product."

Alongside solubility testing, once the team had selected the final three blends, they used gas chromatography to produce extremely precise tasting notes.

"The idea to use gas chromatography came from Carlie Dyer, Master Blender at Starward Whisky in Melbourne, one of the artisan who helped us develop the Mosaic collection. When we approached the company who did the testing, we were the first coffee roaster they'd worked with," says Peter.

The method is used to identify aroma and flavour compounds in the coffee, which Lavazza employed to ensure its flavour notes were scientifically accurate.

"The results were fascinating. It allowed us to identify the subtle nuances between the coffees in the collection," he says.

"From a confidence perspective, it also enables our clients to tell their customers, 'There are flavours of apple in there', because there's a compound that proves it."

Peter says the gas chromatography tests are a great example of how the hand-picked group of artisans – which also includes Pana Barbounis, Chocolatier and Founder of Pana Organic, and Daimon Downey, contemporary artist and restaurateur – helped the team at Lavazza to create a unique collection of coffees that truly captures Australia's coffee culture.

National Training Manager Nick Ferrara (left) says nitrogen flushing beans keeps them fresher for longer.

"Mosaic has been a huge success since it launched in September 2024," he says.

"The three blends –Tidal, Ochre, and Retreat – each capture a different section of the country's coffee drinkers, and the feedback we've received so far has made all the hours and effort we poured into the project well worth it."

Both Peter and Nick believe taking these steps to go the extra mile is worth the time and expense to supply its café partners across Australia with the best possible coffees.

For more information, visit lavazzamosaic.com.au

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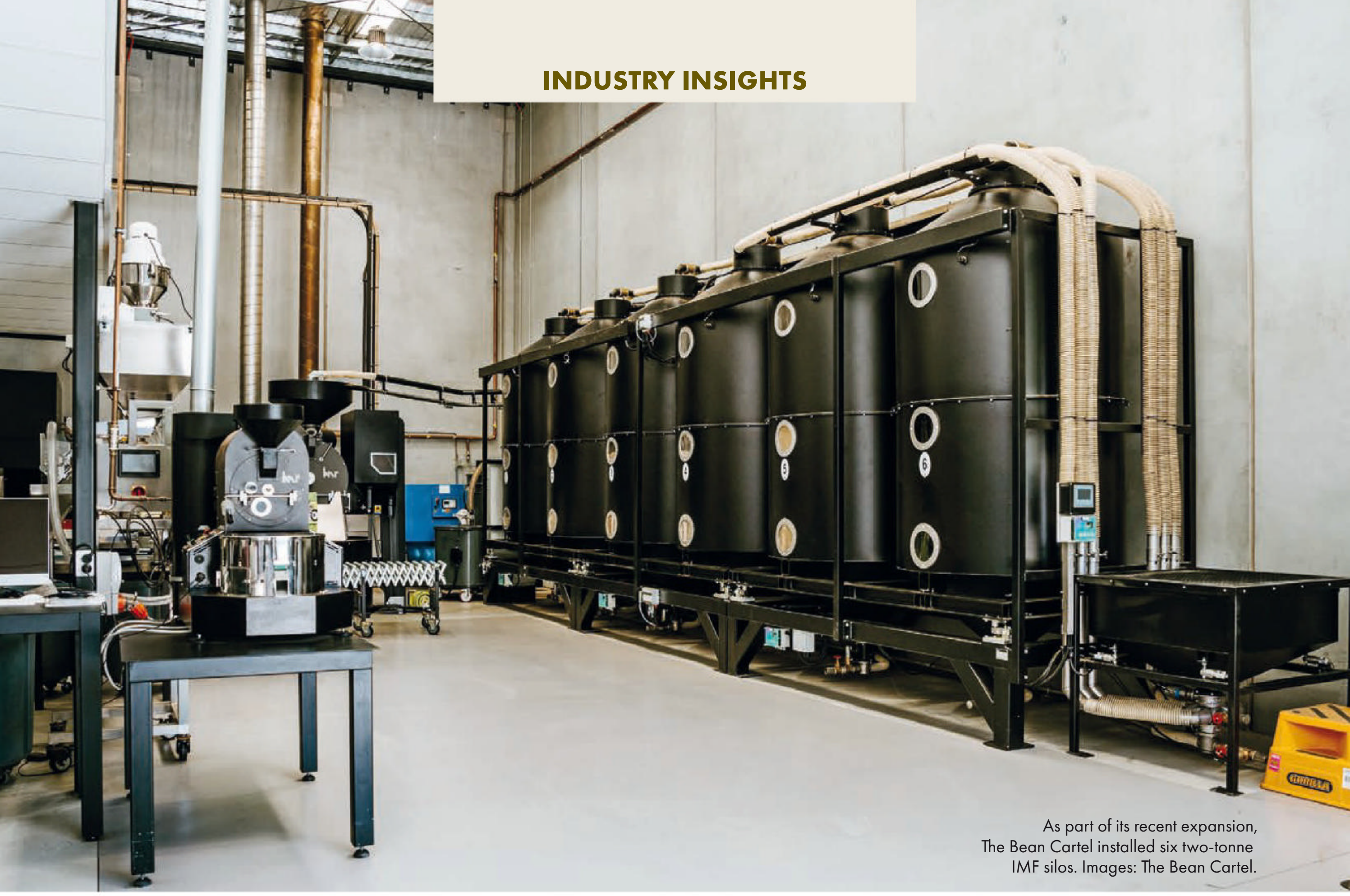

As part of its recent expansion, The Bean Cartel installed six two-tonne IMF silos. Images: The Bean Cartel.

Expanding the Cartel

The Bean Cartel Founder Stacy Visser reveals how an almost decade-long partnership with Roastquip has helped the specialty roaster expand and evolve.

The Bean Cartel is in a significant period of change. The Melbourne specialty roaster recently doubled the size of its premises and installed six two-tonne green bean silos to keep up with rising demand.

Following a successful rebrand that's caught the attention of Australia's coffee drinkers and a recent flurry of industry awards for its signature single origins and blends, The Bean Cartel has cemented itself as a prominent specialty roaster in Australia. Founder Stacy Visser says the roastery has tripled its output since it first installed a 60-kilogram IMF roaster.

"In 2017, we transitioned from contract to in-house roasting for a number of reasons," he says.

"The first was so we could have autonomy over our product and build on the brand identity we were establishing. We also wanted to shift from the mainstream side of the coffee industry into the specialty sector. It felt like the right time to make the move, and as a bonus it made roasting more exciting for our team as they could explore new beans and origins."

Space was also an issue for the growing business. With contract roasting, Stacy and team needed to move their beans pretty quickly after roasting and their storage facilities were filling up fast. The clear solution was to move to larger headquarters and invest in their own roasting equipment.

"The IMF RM60 roaster first caught my eye at Melbourne International Coffee Expo (MICE) in 2016. I couldn't believe how small the footprint of the machine was; it's a 60-kilogram roaster but looks more like a 30-kilogram model," he says.

This initial encounter inspired Stacy to research Italian manufacturer IMF and its Australian distributor, Roastquip. Alongside the size of the machine, it was its gas efficiency and low emissions that persuaded him to take the plunge and partner with Will Notaras at Roastquip to install the model at the Notting Hill roastery.

"The IMF RM60 is much more efficient than the roaster we worked with previously, with a [up to 47 per cent] reduction in gas usage thanks to its recycled heat technology," he says.

"Its sustainable benefits were certainly one of the selling points. At the time, the industry was starting to take its impact on the environment more seriously; we'd just installed solar panels on our warehouse and were looking for other ways to reduce emissions."

Another functionality that appealed to The Bean Cartel was the flexibility the roasting equipment provides. Although still a traditional drum roaster, the RM60 uses indirect hot air to heat the drum rather than a naked flame, which is designed to provide a cleaner heat to enable the coffee to retain more of its origin characteristics. This, paired with its ability to control temperature to one-degree of accuracy for improved consistency, sealed the deal for Stacy.

"The in-direct heat allows our Head Roaster Alan Chan to have much more control over the recipes and play around with different flavours," he says.

The IMF RM60 arrived fully assembled with the afterburner, destoner, and loader all in one compact unit. Its automatic functions mean it can be operated by a single person, with the machine able to automatically load, roast to a 12-step profile, destone, and then load the coffee into a blender if required.

When The Bean Cartel purchased the roaster, they also invested in a 220-kilogram blender, which can blend coffees in less than five minutes and saves the team hours compared to the laborious manual process.

"Having the blender also allows us to roast by origin and blend before packing," says Stacy.

"We much prefer this method because it means we can extract the intricate flavours and nuances of each coffee. For example, we'll roast an Ethiopian lighter than a Brazilian we're going to blend it with. It gives us the flexibility of a smaller roaster at a much larger scale."

Over the past year, The Bean Cartel has continued to expand its operations after securing a new warehouse facility at a prime business-park location. Pivotal to the expansion plans are six two-tonne IMF silos, which arrived in September 2024. Roastquip's Melbourne installation team had the silos installed and running in less than five days.

"The silos significantly boost our storage and processing capacity and represent our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of coffee quality and freshness," Stacy says.

Developed to keep the green beans at a stable temperature to preserve flavour, the silos also feature integrated load cells that are programmed to automatically weigh and load the coffee into the roaster. This automatic function was developed to reduce handling and labour costs considerably.

"We realised we had a lot of inefficiencies when it came to loading green beans and the floor space the pallets took up. Introducing the six silos has given us 12 tonnes of green bean storage overnight," he says.

"It's also freed up around eight to 10 hours each week of our Head Roaster's time, which was spent loading green bean hoppers. This time can now be used to experiment with new single origins and to cup coffees."

With the brand's first shipment of direct-trade coffee arriving from Uganda in January, Stacy says the additional silo storage means the roastery is able to source its own container shipments more regularly. The addition also enables The Bean Cartel to expand further and take on contract roasting for other companies.

"At first, we were only going to introduce one-tonne silos, but Will convinced us that as we grow we'd regret not opting for the larger capacity," says Stacy.

"It was good advice as we have some big partnerships with national and franchise clients on the horizon. We're now set up to be able to facilitate these large-scale clients."

According to Stacy, Will's support and advice has been invaluable and a key reason behind Roastquip and The Bean Cartel's continued partnership.

"Will has been a fantastic conduit between us and the team at IMF in Italy. He'll make sure any questions are answered as quickly as possible," he says.

"He's been in the industry since 2007 and is one of the most knowledgeable coffee professionals I know. He's the sort of person we want to work with to continue to raise coffee standards in Australia."

Stacy also praises the quality of the equipment and says there hasn't been a single issue with the RM60 in the eight years The Bean Cartel has used it.

"The equipment is fantastic," he says. "It's very reliable and we love how efficient it is." ◘

For more information, visit roastquip.com.au or imf-srl.com

Founder Stacy Visser says The Bean Cartel roastery has tripled its output since it installed a 60-kilogram IMF roaster.

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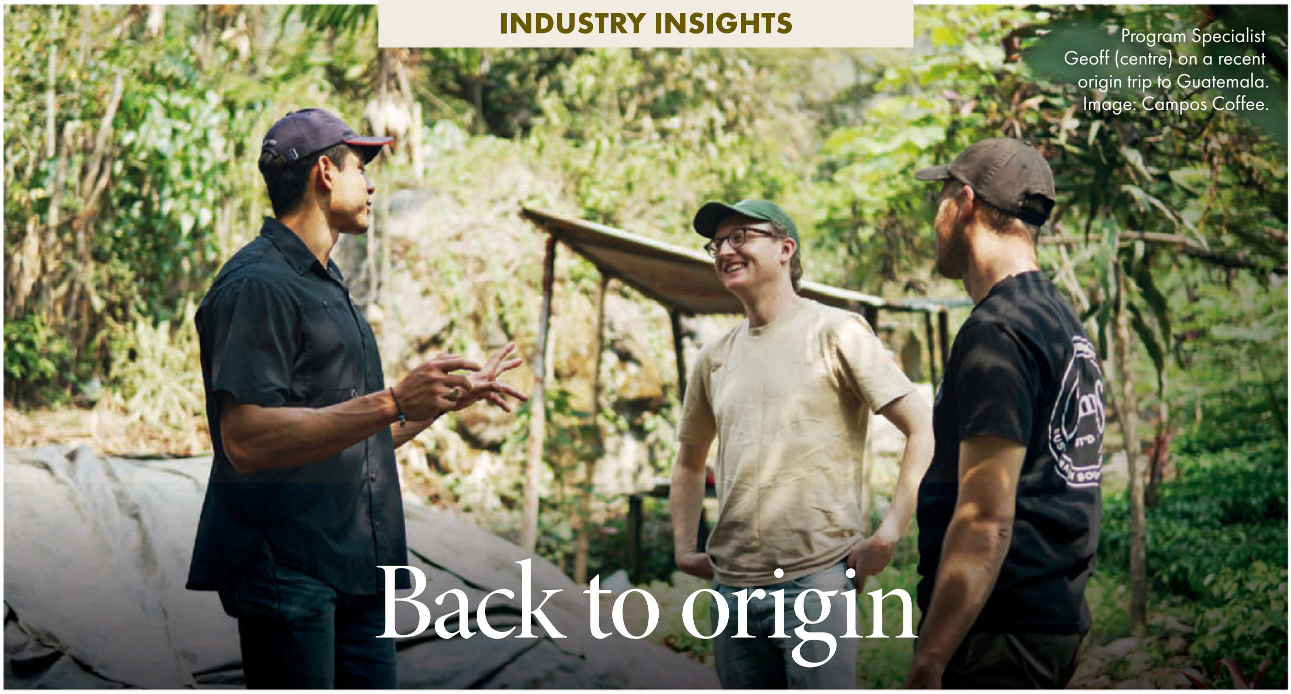

Program Specialist Geoff (centre) on a recent origin trip to Guatemala. Image: Campos Coffee.

Back to origin

Campos Coffee is relaunching its Coffee of the Month program to spotlight the unique characteristics of each producing country.

The past decade has seen unparalleled innovation in the coffee processing space. From anaerobic fermentation to carbonic maceration to fruit co-fermentation, producers around the world are experimenting with different processing methods to explore new flavour profiles and deliver novel coffees.

This experimentation has seen a huge influx of funky new single origin coffees entering the market. For the roasting team at Campos Coffee in Sydney, it's been exciting to share these unique coffees with their wholesale customers and consumers via programs such as their Lab Series.

While these programs have been successful and the Campos roasters continue to enjoy working with these experimental single origins, they're taking a different direction with their popular Coffee of the Month series.

"In recent years, the variety of flavours you can get from coffee has changed quite considerably. When I started in the industry 15 years ago, we didn't have these crazy fermented coffees and that made it easier for consumers to pinpoint the origins they did and didn't like," says Geoff Clarke, Campos Coffee Program Specialist.

"The Coffee of the Month program is designed to help our café partners introduce single origins to their customers who might not be familiar. With this in mind, we're bringing it back to what we originally intended it to be: a new coffee each month that represents the characteristics of the country from which it was sourced."

From February 2025, each month Geoff and team will select a single origin they believe reflects the authentic flavour profile of its region.

"Processing can have a big impact on flavour, which can obscure the flavours brought about through the varietal or terroir of each coffee. Therefore, we want to share the coffees that represent their origins, such as clean, chocolatey Guatemalans, or the wine-like acidity and blackcurrant notes that are the hallmark of Kenyan coffees," he says.

The team will work alongside their long-term producing partners to choose the roster of premium beans, as well as collaborating with farms they've not previously sourced from. Geoff says the feedback loop Campos has established with its partner farms is key to the selection process.

"Because we've been buying coffee for 22 years, we've experienced the identities of coffees from each country. In many cases, we've been buying from the same producers for more than 10 years," he says.

"We're able to chat to them and ask what they think the flavour profiles of a coffee from their region are. An example is a coffee we recently bought from Renardo at Finca La Bolsa in Guatemala, which came sixth in the local Cup of Excellence competition. Renardo hadn't entered the competition in years because it's often dominated by exotic varieties such as Geishas, Pacamaras and SLs, but he was so proud to win with a traditional Guatemalan variety. This represents exactly the kind of coffees we'll feature."

While almost all coffee consumed is one of two species – Arabica or Robusta – different origins produce wildly different tasting beans. Terroir, such as the soil, micro-climate, and altitude, influence flavour but, according to Geoff, the traditional and cultural farming practices of that origin play a much larger role.

"How the coffee has been farmed and processed has a big impact, and that's not even considering the different varieties. There are hundreds of different ways to dry and process beans, and over the years each country has come up with its own methods and traditions," he says.

"For example, in Kenya you typically see a lot of SL28 and SL34 coffees. They have a particular way of processing the coffee – a double ferment washing technique – which makes it very easy to spot a Kenyan coffee as it will almost always have blackcurrant notes."

The relaunch of the Coffee of the Month program aims to get more cafés serving single origins and give consumers a first-class ticket to a world tour of the growing regions. While the uninitiated might find blends less intimidating, Geoff stresses there's nothing to be afraid of.

"Single origins are great for people who want to try something new. The beans are typically a bit more expensive, score a little higher, and often taste fruitier, but it all comes down to the individual coffee," he says.

"They can also vary widely in flavour profiles. For customers who are unsure, I always say take a look at the tasting notes and give it a go if it sounds like something you'll enjoy."

Campos' relaunched Coffee of the Month program is available via the Campos website, including as a monthly subscription service or via its selected partner cafés.

For more information, visit camposcoffee.com

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Images: Piazza D'Oro.

Saki Samarathunga of Coffee Ministry in Melbourne never forgets his customers' names or orders.

Coffee, consistency, connection

One café owner reveals his unique recipe for success and how a coffee partnership helps bring it to life.

Those who've visited Coffee Ministry venues in Armadale, Caulfield North, or Malvern East will know it's all about consistency, both in customer service and the coffee served. Owner Saki Samarathunga's likely to remember a customer's order, name, and probably even their kids' names – because to him, each customer is more than just a transaction.

With a wealth of hospitality expertise under his belt after 12 years working his way up the chain of command in the field, Saki has taken note of best practice and now his venues are known for high-quality customer service and coffee.

He's learnt that people love being treated as individuals and the reason they return to Coffee Ministry is because of the added flare they can't find anywhere else.

"We've built a reputation for being consistent and caring about the little things," he says.

However, Saki says he wasn't always a memory savant.

"In the early days, we didn't focus on personal connections. You'd just take the order and hand over the coffee, without really getting to know the customer. I worked in fast-paced environments, so it was all about efficiency," he says.

"It wasn't until we started taking names that things really shifted for us – remembering names just clicks. It's something that sticks with me, and it's made a real difference in building those personal connections with customers."

Saki, much like Coffee Ministry's loyal customers who rely on it as their go-to coffee spot, values reliability and depends on Piazza D'Oro to supply the cafés with premium beans.

He believes the perfect coffee should be full-bodied with good depth of flavour, but above all, all cups should be alike in quality. And Piazza D'Oro craft the ideal blend for the discerning palate of his Melburnian clientele.

"Not everyone wants it super strong, but generally they like a coffee that has depth, good flavour, and isn't too milky. If you go to other cities or countries, sometimes the coffee feels overly milky or diluted, but in Melbourne people are used to a more robust coffee experience. They want to feel the coffee in their cup," he says.

"And when it comes to coffee, Melbourne is on a whole different level. It's a place where people are always pushing the boundaries and improving the way coffee is made. The competition here is fierce, with each café constantly striving to do better."

Saki says Coffee Ministry delivers high-quality, flavourful, and balanced coffee that pushes boundaries thanks to Piazza D'Oro's Mezzo blend.

"Piazza D'Oro has been a huge part of what makes our business run smoothly and the coffee they provide is always reliable – I can count on it every time," he says.

Beyond the blend, Saki explains that no matter the setback he encounters, he can always reach out to his sales representatives, Eleni and Paul, and the issue is addressed immediately.

"Often with suppliers you have to escalate issues to a manager or general manager, but with Piazza D'Oro it's much simpler. The salesperson takes care of it and it's sorted quickly," says Saki.

"Consistency is one of their strengths, and that's a big part of why we're able to serve quality coffee day in, day out."

Saki says this level of service is especially important in Melbourne, as he understands that Melburnians can't start their day without a cup of coffee. It's more than just a habit – it's woven into the very fabric of the city's lifestyle.

And, because of the fast-paced lifestyle Melburnians are accustomed to, Coffee Ministry has opted to open 365-days a year with no exceptions.

"We focus on reliability and speed. Melburnians are always on the go, so we've designed our service to be fast and efficient," says Saki.

"All my locations are strategically placed in areas where people are in a hurry. Our Caulfield North café is right across from a park and tram stops, Armadale is directly in front of a train station, and the Malvern East location is also near a train station. People passing by are often in a rush, so we make sure our service matches that need."

However, Saki says scaling is no easy feat. But, backed by a solid team both internally and externally, it has been a resounding success.

"Piazza D'Oro has helped me with marketing materials, like cups, bags, and other promotional items. Whenever I need something a little different – whether it's umbrellas, barriers, or anything else, they're always ready to assist," says Saki.

"There's never a 'no' or 'we can't do that' from them. Instead, they always say, 'Let's work together and figure out how we can make this happen'."

Saki says without the talented and dedicated team he has built over the years, managing several locations would not have been possible.

"Scaling was definitely one of the hardest challenges I've faced, and the key to overcoming this was training my team, especially my managers. You can't be everywhere at once, so you have to rely on your people," he says.

"I took it upon myself to train them personally, passing on my knowledge, my approach, and my mindset. Once I had the right people in place, I could trust them to manage the locations and uphold the standards I set. I wouldn't have been able to scale without this team."

By surrounding himself with the right people, Saki is able to maintain his commitment to quality over quantity: he's not concerned with how little milk or coffee is wasted to ensure they're serving a great cup.

PIAZZA D'ORO ESPRESSO

Piazza D'Oro has been a close ally to Coffee Ministry, as they share values of consistency and reliability.

"If anyone on my team feels that a coffee isn't up to standard before serving it, I always tell them to throw it away. I'd rather waste a little than serve something subpar," he says.

"Ultimately, it's not just about the coffee – it's about looking after people and building a sense of community where customers know they're more than just a transaction." ■

For more information, visit **piazzadoro.com.au**

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During its 70-year history, Tuscan brand Caffè Corsini has built a global reputation for its Italian coffee. Image: Caffè Corsini.

A new classic

Launching in Australia in March, long-standing Italian roaster Caffè Corsini brings a new premium option to the table for the out-of-home coffee sector.

The Australian and Italian coffee industries are intrinsically linked thanks to the Italian immigrants who were fundamental in establishing a café culture here. While the coffee scene has grown, evolved, and carved out its own niche in Australia since its origins in the first half of the 20th century, Italy is still regarded by many as the epitome of coffee knowledge and quality.

Italian-style roasts remain the uncontested king of coffees among numerous consumer sectors, and many hospitality venues continue to favour traditional flavour profiles. With an increasing interest in premium coffee offerings across the out-of-home sector, Melitta Professional Coffee Solutions saw a gap in the Australian market for its Italian brand Caffè Corsini.

"We're proud to introduce Caffè Corsini to Australia, a brand that embodies the essence of Italian coffee artistry and craftsmanship," says Justin Rejske, Managing Director of Melitta Professional Australia.

"With its rich heritage, commitment to sustainability, and dedication to exceptional quality, Caffè Corsini aligns perfectly with Australia's sophisticated coffee culture."

Established by Corsino Corsini in 1950 as a small artisanal coffee workshop, the Tuscan roastery has built a global following over the past 70 years. Today, some of the world's best coffee talent, including Best Italian Coffee Roaster 2019 Michele Anedotti and three-time Italian Barista Champion Francesco Sanapo, are among the team who produce the brand's extensive range of quality beans.

International coffee machine specialist Melitta Professional formed a strategic alliance with the roastery in 2022, with the aim of expanding the coffee brand's international reach.

Justin says the partnership enables Melitta's Australian wing to add unique coffee options and captivating flavours to its complete coffee solutions service.

"The launch represents our commitment to bringing unique, world-class coffee experiences to Australian coffee lovers, further enriching the market with a touch of authentic Tuscany," he says.

"The two blends we're introducing are astonishing coffees. They're a bit lighter than traditional Italian blends and have incredible flavour profiles."

The new launch will be aimed at the lifestyle sector, with hotels, restaurants, bars, and offices the core target market.

"The out-of-home sector is increasingly looking for a premium coffee option for their customers. They want to offer quality on par with specialty coffee standards in a lifestyle setting, and many customers have come to expect this too," says Justin.

With a wealth of historic Italian brands already established in the market, the launch of Caffè Corsini doesn't aim to shake up the market with novel products but instead offer a point of differentiation for businesses wanting to stand out from the crowd.

"It's important to offer a point of differentiation in what is quite a saturated market. Caffè Corsini introduces a different brand strategy that's focused on premiumisation," says Justin.

"In the out-of-home sector, there's a continual push to improve coffee quality and attract more customers. Coffee is highly competitive, so venue owners are looking for a different choice. With our experience in coffee preparation, at Melitta we have the ability to bring something new to the table."

As a complete service provider, Melitta Professional supplies business owners with everything they need to serve coffee in their venue – from fully and semi- automatic coffee machines to premium beans and financing options.

"We focus on six pillars: machines, coffee and consumables, technical service, customised solutions, digitisation, and financing. We can bring all these elements together in one package to create a very straightforward coffee solution," says Justin.

"The Caffè Corsini launch is an extension of this service, allowing us to expand our range with exceptional Italian roasts."

The new range will be officially launched at Melbourne International Coffee Expo (MICE) at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre from 20 to 22 March. Attendees will be able to try the two core Caffè Corsini blends, as well as trial Melitta Professional's intelligent coffee preparation equipment. ◘

For more information, visit melitta-professional.com.au

Tamp champ

AUTO PRESS
Cleaning

The Auto Press V4 is designed to thrive in busy café environments. Image: Coffee Machine Technologies.

Coffee Machine Technologies introduces the fourth generation Auto Press, its most value-based, precision-driven version of the automatic tamper to date.

The art of tamping is often overlooked. While café owners and roasters pore over the latest espresso machine technology to brew the perfect cup and contemplate the intricacies of each grinder model to get the best out of their beans, the equipment used in the step between these two engineering feats isn't usually a priority.

However, according to Gianluca Colangeli, Assistant General Manager of equipment specialist Coffee Machine Technologies, tamping equipment shouldn't be an afterthought.

"Having a quality tamper that's reliable is hugely important to the workflow of a barista. Introducing automatic equipment like an Auto Press not only increases speed but also precision," he says.

"Workflow isn't the only benefit either. A great tamper will improve the consistency of the coffee and work alongside the other equipment to create the best possible cup."

Applying pressure to ground coffee within the basket using a tamper to ensure it is level is an essential step to crafting great espresso. The process removes air pockets, creates a compact surface, and produces an even consistency for the hot water to flow through the puck in a uniform manner to extract the best flavour.

For decades, this process has been conducted manually, with baristas using traditional hand-held tampers and brute force to condense the grounds in the basket. More recently, café owners have been switching to automatic models – not only to improve consistency of distribution but also to avoid repetitive strain injuries.

Since the introduction of automated tamping equipment, Coffee Machine Technologies has been working with the engineers at Auto Press to produce products that serve the intricacies of the Australian coffee market. With high-volume and a preference for espresso-based coffee, the local sector required a solution that provides consistency at pace.

"We were aware a lot of the reliable automated tampers in the market were very expensive. A quality model would cost $2000 plus, which isn't affordable for a lot of café owners and roasters in this economic climate," says Gianluca.

"We wanted to create a great product around the $1000 mark that would provide the quality and consistency of a model double its price."

Working alongside the engineering team and building on the success of previous Auto Press tampers, Coffee Machine Technologies developed the Auto Press V4. Released in Australia in January 2025, Gianluca says the new model caters to the needs of local baristas, café owners, and roasters.

Coffee Machine Technologies wanted to offer an automatic tamer that was reliable and affordable. Image: GCapture/stock.adobe.com.

"A GREAT TAMPER WILL IMPROVE THE CONSISTENCY OF THE COFFEE AND WORK ALONGSIDE THE OTHER EQUIPMENT TO CREATE THE BEST POSSIBLE CUP."

"We've been working with Auto Press for eight years and this is by far the best version of the automatic tamper we've created. Many competitor models struggle with motors and parts, meaning the equipment can be unreliable and doesn't last long," he says.

"For the V4, we've upgraded the motor and reinforced all of the components so the tamper can not only keep up with the demands of a busy environment but thrive."

While the product can be a reliable piece of kit for high-volume cafés, Gianluca believes it can also provide great value for smaller and less busy venues.

"The V4 is very compact, so it won't take up too much bench space at smaller venues that need to be economic with their equipment choices. It easily fits alongside espresso machines and grinders, therefore can be integrated into the barista's workflow very simply," he says.

Another highlight of the new model is its removable cleaning mechanism, which is designed to make cleaning the equipment easier than ever.

"To clean most other automatic tampers, the barista needs to unscrew the tamper head to access the parts that require cleaning. In most cases, this means the equipment doesn't end up being cleaned regularly. This can lead to faults with the mechanics of the tamper. It can also impact taste, as old grounds can't be removed properly," says Gianluca.

"A magnetic mechanism developed specifically for the V4 means the tamper head can easily be removed, without the need for any tools. The magnetic clip surround pops off at the touch of button, giving users access in seconds."

Gianluca recommends that the equipment should be cleaned at the end of each day to ensure the V4 continues to function at full capacity and provide the best tasting coffee.

As with all products Coffee Machine Technologies stocks, the V4 was tested by a hand-picked group of the company's most knowledgeable clients before being launched at scale. According to Gianluca, the feedback so far has been overwhelmingly positive.

"Everyone that's used it so far has loved it. They highlight the reliability and consistency of the tamper and say their teams have found it very easy to clean and maintain," he says.

The Auto Press V4 is exclusively distributed in Australia by Coffee Machines Technologies and is available in black or white casing. Interested parties can see the equipment in action at the company's showrooms in Carlton, Tullamarine, Geelong, Rye, and Sydney. ◘

For more information, visit coffeemachinetechnologies.com.au

Peter Wolff and Bloomtec Co-Owner Avril Bloomfield. Images: Wolff Coffee Roasters.

From fax to Franke

Peter Wolff reveals how technology has advanced the industry over the past 40 years and why he believes automation is coffee's next frontier.

Over the past century, technological innovations have continued to change the course of history. From planes to penicillin, floppy disks to freeze-dried coffee, inventions constantly pivot the way we live and work. For Peter Wolff, Founder of Wolff Coffee Roasters in Brisbane, the introduction of the fax machine in the 1980s was one of those game-changing moments.

"I remember when we got our first fax machine, which gave us a much-faster method of communication with the farmers we worked with at origin who we'd previously contacted via telegram or letter," says Peter.

"One of our producers in India would send a young lad from the farm to the post office on his bike to pick up our faxes and send replies. They were so expensive to send we'd cram as much as we could on one page. It blew my mind."

Being in the coffee industry for more than 40 years, the seasoned roaster has witnessed huge change throughout the sector – from communicating with farmers to brewing technology and consumer preferences. Alongside the fax machine, he also fondly remembers unboxing his first espresso machine.

"When I started out in the industry in Queensland, pourover coffee was the standard brewing style. When our first espresso machine arrived from Italy, all the instructions were in Italian. We didn't have the internet as a tool to translate, so we had to ask an Italian man who worked down the road to come and help us out," he says.

"We had the same issue if we wanted to speak to the espresso machine producers in Italy, as they didn't speak any more English than we did Italian. But these challenges turned out to be a good thing because they forced us to be creative and problem solve."

Today, the innovation that's changing the course of the coffee industry is automation, something Peter is also embracing. He believes several factors are paving the way towards an almost fully automated coffee culture.

"Automation is absolutely the future of coffee, especially espresso machines. We're at a point in time where there isn't a strong desire for careers in hospitality," he says.

"This is amplified by an appetite for convenience and being able to access coffee in a wider variety of venues, alongside the pandemic that saw a lot of people buying machines to prepare coffee at home. There's now a wealth of information available to make great coffee from your kitchen."

Over the past five years, the Wolff Coffee Roasters team have trialled a range of super-automatic espresso machines for their wholesale customers in out-of-café settings such as care homes and corporate. While Peter quickly saw automatic machines as the ideal solution for these clients, he didn't find quite the right partner until he started working with Franke Coffee Systems in 2024.

"Traditionally, if a coffee doesn't taste right we've blamed the barista or the water or anything to avoid blaming the way the beans have been roasted. What I like about super-automatic machines is that you're removing the possibility of human error, which allows the coffee to shine without any excuses," he says.

"After working with several other manufacturers, Franke piqued my interest. Working with a new company I was cautious at first, but to the Franke team's credit they were great. They gave me a machine to play with and said to take my time to make my decision."

Peter was impressed by Franke's A line of super-automatic machines and first installed an A1000 at Whitsunday Coast Airport. He says the team quickly fell in love with using the machine.

"One of the best things about the A1000 is the telemetry system. The team at the airport can call me up and say, 'I forgot to add a babyccino to the menu', and from the Wolff Coffee Roasters HQ in Brisbane I can dial in the exact recipe for their cup size and setup," says Peter.

"The ability to build the recipes and ensure our coffee tastes exactly how we want it to taste – wherever it's being prepared – is incredible. We're able to control all the parameters from our dashboard – from the dose to the water temperature.”

He also highlights how the heat map on the dashboard enables his team to suggest the best automatic cleaning times for each venue.

“This allows us to advise the client when the sweet spot is to set the machine to self-clean. It’s essential to select a time that won’t impact business, so having this information to share with them is extremely valuable,” he says.

The roastery now has more than 30 Franke super-automatic machines in the field, all part of the A line. Fourteen of those units are at one major Queensland company, which has multiple offices and locations.

“The team at Franke and its service partner Bloomtec visited the client with us and helped to create a bespoke solution to serve its needs. Some of the locations operate 24/7, while others are only nine to five, and some don’t have access to plumbing. Therefore, there were lots of different challenges to address,” says Peter.

“Having that technical support presale, not just after sale, was valuable for both us and the client. They were transparent about servicing and maintenance from the start too, which meant I could be transparent with my client about when costs would occur.”

The Franke A600FMEC super-automatic espresso machine.

Peter says the business sector has been a growing market for Wolff Coffee Roasters as employers look for ways to entice staff back into the office.

“Many employers want to make coming into work an enjoyable experience for their staff and having a great coffee offering is a nice thing to reward them with. It’s great to be able to provide a solution for these businesses by installing a Franke super-automatic machine that’s simple to use and provides quality coffee,” he says.

As his company continues to embrace automation, Peter is exploring how machines like those in Franke’s A line can further advance the industry.

“Convenience is going to continue to be a huge driver for the coffee sector. Last year, we installed a coffee bean vending machine outside for hours when the roastery is closed and it’s been hugely successful,” he says.

“Our next project is to introduce a customer-facing automatic machine that will allow the consumer to make their own drink if they choose, which will be linked to a prepaid coffee subscription. The Franke team have been very open to our suggestions. When we come to them with an idea, instead of saying ‘that can’t be done’, they’ll help us find a solution.”

For more information, visit coffee.franke.com

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Flavour precision

A soon-to-be-released portafilter basket is tipped to set a new standard in extraction and expand the range of possible espresso styles.

When crafting an espresso, each step of the process can make or break a shot. From the grind size to the water temperature, baristas have long relied on precision to achieve the ideal extraction.

And now, a new breed of portafilter basket has emerged to elevate the brewing process and bring baristas one step closer to their idea of perfection.

WAFO Espresso's range of baskets, designed with an oblate round geometry which features a slightly flattened shape to improve water flow and surface contact, have been developed to introduce a new level of control over water flow, surface area, and extraction yield. The result, according to Barista Group Founder Joe Chalhoub, is a more consistent espresso shot that can be made with less coffee while delivering more flavour.

Set to be introduced to the Australian market in early 2025 by Barista Group, WAFO baskets are not just about improving flavour – they also combine economy, sustainability, and quality.

According to Joe, one of the most attractive features of the WAFO basket collection is its versatility. With a wider brew ratio range, baristas can experiment with different extraction styles.

There are two series in WAFO's product line of baskets. The SOE series focuses on even extraction, which Joe says creates clean, clear flavours with a narrow range. The Spirit basket, which has 2916 elongated holes, highlights smooth sweetness and subtle acidity, while the Everest basket provides clarity and bold flavours.

The BLEND series uses asymmetric hole patterns for uneven extraction and allows for a wider flavour range. The Origin basket enhances sweetness with balanced acidity, and the Checkmate delivers a bittersweet profile ideal for milk-based drinks. Meanwhile, the Solar System series, with off-centre holes, creates unique flavour profiles based on hole placement.

"WAFO baskets empower baristas and roasters by giving them more flexibility in their range of extractions," says Joe.

Traditionally, espresso is brewed with a 1:2 ratio with about 20 grams of coffee to 40 grams of output. But with the WAFO basket, baristas can experiment with extended brew ratios, such as 1:2.5 or even 1:3, creating more complex and nuanced flavour profiles.

WAFO Espresso's range of baskets, designed with an oblate round geometry, feature a slightly flattened shape to improve water flow and surface contact.

This allows baristas to create something experimental, such as a more elongated brew, akin to an AeroPress-style extraction.

Joe explains that while darker roasts may not benefit from extended brew ratios, lighter roasts can handle higher brew ratios without over-extracting. However, it is important to note that solubles are harder to extract in lighter roasted coffee. Joe says with the WAFO, the filter basket can be eliminated as a variable to extract efficiently.

"Lighter roasts have more soluble compounds that are released during extraction, which means you can push the brew ratio further without risk of bitterness or over-extraction," he says.

The WAFO basket is also designed to provide greater control over the flow of water, ensuring the coffee is extracted evenly across the puck, regardless of the brew ratio.

Joe says traditional baskets, which often use a relatively small number of holes, can struggle to deliver consistent results, especially when extracting delicate flavours from lighter roasts. Meanwhile, WAFO baskets are engineered to deliver optimal results across a broader spectrum of brew ratios thanks to the oblate round geometry and quantity of holes.

He adds that the manufacturing process for these baskets is far more meticulous than what is used for standard baskets.

"Manufacturing each basket can take up to 15 minutes. In comparison, a commercial facility may produce three traditional baskets in the same time," he says.

The SOE Everest basket features up to 3136 holes, which maximises surface area for coffee extraction. Joe believes this increased surface area is essential because it facilitates higher extraction yields and allows more flavour compounds to be drawn out of the coffee.

This increased extraction is beneficial for specialty coffee, where subtle flavours and complex aromas define a standout brew. Joe says the added surface area helps baristas highlight those delicate flavours without the risk of under- or over-extracting.

Significantly, the increased number of holes, combined with the unique geometry, provides more surface area, which in turn allows baristas to extract more from the same amount of coffee.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the WAFO baskets, Joe and the team at Socratic Coffee – a small crew of coffee and research professionals co-founded by Joe – conducted experiments comparing the performance of a WAFO basket with that of a traditional basket.

"When I first encountered the WAFO baskets at the Taipei Tea & Coffee Expo I was intrigued but sceptical," he says. "But after testing it back in Australia, I was blown away by the results."

"We used both the WAFO basket and the VST basket in controlled experiments. The WAFO basket had significantly higher TDS and achieved this higher extraction while reaching the beverage mass goal significantly faster."

In addition to its high extraction yield, the experiment shows that the WAFO basket also saves time. Joe says this might mean less coffee can be used to achieve similar or better extraction to that of a standard basket. He adds that WAFO baskets could significantly impact how coffee shops operate. By increasing extraction efficiency, these baskets could enable cafés to use less coffee per shot while still achieving the same flavour profile.

Joe says due to their highly-specialised design, he recommends using them for single origin espresso only. He also cites limitations in cleaning, as the baskets require an ultrasonic cleaner.

"Barista Group is planning to stock these ultrasonic cleaners, and WAFO is also introducing a new range that requires less cleaning," he says.

Despite this, Joe says Barista Group has seen the value of these baskets firsthand.

"Using less time per shot while maintaining flavour consistency is a huge advantage, both from a cost and sustainability perspective," he says.

"Barista Group only imports and works exclusively with products that stand out and make a real difference. We only carry products that have a unique value proposition, and the WAFO basket definitely fits that bill."

For more information, visit baristagroup.com.au

Made in Taiwan
SOE
SPIRIT
H26.5

WAFO baskets are said to empower baristas and roasters by giving them more flexibility in their range of extractions.

Images: Barista Group.

VENEZIANO
Coffee Roasters
SUMMER
BLEND
BLOOD ORANGE PINEAPPLE ELDERFLOWER
WARNING: May cause spontaneous day dreams of sandy toes and sunshine.
Scan to shop
REFRESHING & JUICY
SUMMER BLEND
VENEZIANO COFFEE ROASTERS

The Pilot espresso machine was developed for countries that favour milk-based coffee. Image: Barista Attitude.

Espresso with Attitude

Two roasters reveal why they upgraded to the Pilot, Barista Attitude's first single-boiler espresso machine.

When the engineers at Barista Attitude gathered to develop the Italian brand's first single-boiler machine, their aim was to create a model that baristas could easily navigate to produce quality espresso. Like a pilot at the controls of a plane, the barista was to take the reins of the machine to land smooth and consistent coffee.

The Pilot was specifically developed for countries where milk-based coffees take the lead. Since it was launched in Australia in 2023 by independent distributor Coffee Works Express (CWE), it's received widespread recognition for its ability to deliver high-flying drinks with minimal staff training.

For Giuseppe Anapo, Director and Roast Master at Simply Beans in Logan City, Queensland, it was the Pilot's balance of being user friendly while still delivering all the technical needs required of a specialty venue with exacting standards that inspired him to install the machine at his espresso bar.

"As far as I'm concerned, you can't beat Italian espresso machines. They have a history of being workhorses, yet still manage to keep up to date with the latest groundbreaking technology," says Giuseppe.

"I'm a technical person – graphs, extraction times, water pressure, and temperature times are vital for our operation. What blew me away with the Pilot was that the barista has all those functionalities available at the touch of a button."

With a roastery producing a wide range of specialty blends and globetrotting single origins, the Simply Beans espresso bar focuses on giving coffee enthusiasts a versatile menu to choose from. For Giuseppe and team, taste and flavour are paramount.

"Taste is king here. Over the years, I've found extraction on certain machines can look good, but the taste isn't quite right. With the Pilot, we can produce great tasting coffee very easily," he says.

"Unlike some other brands of this calibre, the machine is very user friendly. After spending a short amount of time training my team, they've been blown away with how simple it is to navigate. Everything is at our fingers tips: with a few tweaks here and there, you get great espresso every time."

The Pilot blends the best technology from Barista Attitude's previous Storm and Tempesta models, with users able to manipulate different flavour profiles using the pre-infusion function. However, being a single-boiler model, the user also has the option to simply adjust and monitor a single temperature if they desire.

Giuseppe says that until the Pilot was installed in early 2024, the espresso bar had relied on multi-boiler machines.

"There is a place for multi-boilers, but they're not the be all and end all. The single-boiler machine more than fulfils our needs and we couldn't be happier with it," he says.

Another roaster that's reaping the rewards of the Pilot is Roasting Warehouse. The Melbourne brand has recently installed the machine at a handful of its wholesale customers in Victoria and will soon also introduce a Pilot to its café and retail spaces in Melbourne, South Fremantle, Brisbane, and Athens, Greece.

"We've had a long-standing relationship with the team at CWE spanning more than 20 years. They introduced us to the Pilot and we were impressed by its functionality and durability, but above all the fantastic flavour that comes out of the machine," says Giovanni Ienari, Operations Manager at Roasting Warehouse.

Giovanni believes the Pilot's ability to produce consistent quality at high volume makes it the ideal machine for venues offering an elevated experience.

"I would recommend it for venues doing 40 to 50 kilograms of coffee each week. It's perfect for cafés that take pride in their output and deliver a quality experience from start to finish," he says.

"We always suggest that our high-volume customers doing 30 kilograms or more opt for a high-end machine like the Barista Attitude Pilot."

Alongside its ability to produce high-level taste and flavour, he says the design also adds to the machine's appeal.

"The Pilot stands out from the crowd. The look of the machine instantly grabs your attention. It's also durable. When using it, you can feel the weight of the machine," he says.

Both Giovanni and Giuseppe highlight the support CWE has provided over the years, not just recommending the best equipment for their venues but also the maintenance and service the team provide to ensure espresso machines and grinders are producing the best possible coffee.

"Since we installed the Pilot last year, I haven't had to fix anything. The electronic and hydraulics don't let you down. Even if they did, I know the servicing team at CWE would help us out in no time," says Giuseppe.

Queensland roaster Simply Beans installed a Pilot machine in 2024. Image: Simply Beans.

"The team are so open and happy to share information. They believe in the equipment they provide us, and that's hugely important to the service they deliver. They don't let you down."

Giovanni adds that the training provided by CWE technicians is extremely valuable when getting to know a new product or product upgrade.

"The CWE technician will call us and take us through any updates," he says. "Whether it's changes to the motherboard or upgrading our recipes, they'll always guide us through it." ◘

For more information on the Pilot, get in touch with Australian distributor cwe.com.au

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Innovation meets sustainability

Responding to the resurgence of paper coffee pods, IMA Coffee Hub presents its latest automated technologies designed to enhance sustainability and process control.

While automation is leading the coffee industry's era of innovation, sustainability is also fuelling this significant period of technological advancement. Current market demands place the environmental impact of a product alongside the desire for speed, consistency, and precision.

For Italian manufacturer IMA Coffee, a specialist in processing and packaging machinery, tracking the shifting market to identify new trends ensures it can help its clients to meet demands. As such, it recently introduced a new range of machines and services tailored to the increasing requirement for environmentally conscious production processes and packaging.

"Today, packaging technologies must be flexible enough to accommodate not only varying production speeds but also different packaging materials," says Matteo Barbarossa, coffee expert and Business Developer for the Australian and New Zealand markets at IMA Coffee Hub.

"Beyond providing end-to-end coffee processing and packaging solutions, IMA Coffee is committed to strengthening sustainable practices to reduce emissions during roasting, and testing alternative packaging materials. We implement advanced eco solutions throughout the industrial process to help build a more environmentally friendly industry."

Matteo highlights the growing demand for compostable packaging materials. In response, IMA Group established IMA OpenLab, a network of laboratories and testing facilities focused on researching sustainable materials and optimising production processes.

"We are seeing a growing number of companies investing in sustainable packaging techniques to offset the environmental impact of traditional aluminium and plastic packaging," he says.

"IMA offers a range of packaging machines for single-serve coffee, including capsules and filter paper pods. Our capsule filling machines are highly flexible and capable of handling a variety of materials, including compostable and recyclable options, whether for primary or secondary packaging."

The demand for compostable coffee capsules is expected to rise over the next five years, something IMA believes is due to consumers becoming increasingly health conscious and aware of the environmental impact of traditional capsule packaging.

IMA Coffee is responding to the increasing demand for environmentally conscious packaging. Image: IMA.

At the same time, Matteo says an increasing number of coffee producers are experimenting with or returning to filter paper coffee pods.

"These paper pods, often known as Easy Serving Espresso (ESE) pods, are compostable, which makes them a more environmentally friendly option. This shift towards paper pods has been particularly notable in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, where coffee consumption is high and sustainability is a concern," he says.

For both soft and hard pods, Matteo says IMA Coffee's packaging machines can meet any production requirement, covering all aspects of coffee pod manufacturing – from consultancy and design to production planning and turnkey solutions.

"Soft and hard coffee pods are processed at different speeds in equipment designed to ensure precision, but also flexibility. Packaging can be conducted in a modified and conditioned atmosphere, and pods can be stacked individually, protected in heat-sealed envelopes and packed into heat-sealed vertical pouches or cartons" he says.

IMA Coffee Hub recently partnered with turnkey processing and packaging provider Esko Australia to provide IMA roasting and packaging technologies to the local coffee market. With a 24-year history representing European equipment manufacturers in the region, Matteo believes Esko is IMA's ideal match thanks to their shared principles of innovation and customer focus.

"At Esko Australia, our main goal is to provide innovative and customised solutions for our customers. We work collaboratively with the customer and suppliers to provide the best experience possible," says JJ Wong, Engineer and Business Development Manager at Esko.

"IMA Coffee shares the same customer- and market-focused values and consistently demonstrates willingness to look at all requests, such as finding solutions for height and space limitations, especially in some of Melbourne's heritage buildings."

IMA Coffee's commitment to sustainability and innovation is further reflected in its Coffee Control Room product, a multifunctional automated software package featuring control systems for roasting and packaging to optimise overall efficiency.

Matteo says the new technology is designed to provide flexibility and consistent quality to medium- and large-scale roasters through a comprehensive range of integrated solutions.

"For coffee producers, product customisation and packaging quality assurance are critical factors. This led us to design the Coffee Control Room, which enables producers to fully control process parameters through its automatic data exchange feature," he says.

"Users can monitor production lines through the system's smart monitoring and overall plant control functions. The data exchange feature automates production flow from raw coffee reception to final packaging, offering complete visibility and traceability of the product."

Matteo says Coffee Control Room is a simple, integrable system. The unified dashboard combines roasting and packaging data with plant management systems, creating a fully automated end-to-end solution.

"IMA Coffee Hub aims to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving coffee market by developing high-quality solutions that enhance our customers' performance," he says.

"We'll be glad to meet new potential customers at MICE2025, along with our partner Esko, to present our knowledge, expertise, and offer for the coffee sector". ▯

For more information, visit ima.it/coffee

Tailored for flexibility and quality

QLM Label Makers on flexible, sustainable packaging solutions that help coffee brands navigate supply chain challenges, drive innovation, and scale efficiently.

COFFEE
COFFEE BLEND MÉNAGE
MEDIUM ROASTED STRENGTH
Net Wt 500g
COFFEE
COFFEE BLEND EPURÉ
Net Wt 500g
COFFEE
COFFEE BLEND DÉBUT
500g

Image: QLM Label Makers.

With QLM, roasters can test different blends, designs, or packaging styles in small batches.

Lindsay Nutley, Director of Business Enablement, says QLM Label Makers has mastered a range of packaging options, offering adaptive solutions to supply chain challenges such as instability, MOQ requirements, and quality control issues.

He adds that QLM goes beyond labels to provide a variety of flexible packaging solutions including box bottom, centre-seal, side-seal, and three-side seal bags, as well as stand up pouches and sachets.

The company's adaptability extends to handling bulk runs, multi-SKU orders, and diverse designs, which is especially beneficial for roasters with a wide product range. Lindsay says this flexibility ensures packaging can scale effortlessly as businesses expand.

"Manually labelling products can be time-consuming and costly, that's why we use a digital platform for our flexible packaging, specifically wide-format digital printing on HP Indigo. It gives brands more flexibility," he says.

"QLM also works with contract packers, providing the ability to customise production runs, allowing them to create smaller batches for different customers or larger runs for their own brand without the setup fees of traditional printing. This enables more creative, market-driven packaging solutions."

A key advantage, says Lindsay, is the ability for roasters to test different blends, designs, or packaging styles in smaller batches.

"You can create special editions for holidays or events such as Christmas, or even test new blends without committing to large, fixed quantities. Digital printing gives you the flexibility to tailor packaging to market demands, which is especially useful for roasters that are constantly testing new blends," he says.

And in response to market uncertainty, QLM has identified key trends such as the rising demand for smaller bags and single-use products.

Lindsay says businesses are shifting focus from unit price to cash flow and are realising the benefits of only ordering what's needed, when it's needed. By adapting to this shift, QLM reduces the pressure of high-volume purchases in a challenging economic climate.

"For example, we recently did a customised box that contained eight different styles of beans, but instead of one large bag per type, each was in a small, individual pouch. This is another example of how brands are innovating in terms of packaging size and variety," he says.

And in a competitive space such as coffee, Lindsay believes QLM thrives on helping brands stand out by developing flexible and creative solutions. This approach helps companies to increase visibility and engage their audience, often through smaller, more cost-effective packaging options that don't require the commitment of larger runs.

"We work closely with brands to understand their values, target markets, and how they want to position themselves. Then, we help them develop creative strategies to penetrate those spaces and drive growth. It's an exciting part of what we do," he says.

QLM carefully selects high-quality packaging materials that balance sustainability with product protection to ensure freshness and resistance to moisture and oxygen.

By mid 2025, the company expects to transition its entire range to mono-materials that enhance recyclability and reduce environmental impact.

Traditionally, many in the coffee industry have relied on labels applied to base packaging.

However, Lindsay points out that the use of inferior materials for these labels and packaging can lead to a deterioration in product quality, ultimately affecting the integrity of the coffee beans.

"When it comes to paper options – biodegradable or what some people call 'eco-friendly' materials, as well as certain film materials – issues like moisture content and oxygen transfer are often overlooked," he says.

According to Lindsay, these factors can lead to serious longevity issues for products in the marketplace, especially when base packaging lacks proper moisture barriers. While eco-friendly and paper-based materials may seem like a good option, if they can't maintain the integrity of the beans, it can result in product deterioration and product recall in worst case scenarios.

"What we've observed is that if a company has rapid consumption times for their product, these issues are less problematic," he says.

"But that's not the case for everyone, such as smaller roasters that batch their coffee, and larger roasters that need to store massive batches."

Lindsay adds that the company is not just a "shiny new thing" operation – behind every design or packaging solution, there's a robust technical foundation.

"Our team work hard to understand the technical components that ensure packaging performs as it should," he says. "This means the structural integrity, barrier properties, and freshness protection of our materials are as important to us as the branding and design."

For more information, visit qlmgroup.com

Eco impact

For packaging manufacturer The Bag Broker, sustainability is not just a product offering but a core value that CEO and Founder Holger Nygaard lives by every day.

Embracing sustainability from the top down, The Bag Broker Founder Holger Nygaard avoids air travel, follows a vegan diet, and is committed to closing the loop on environmental impact. Naturally, this ethos extends to the company's sustainable packaging products.

What's more, with roots in the specialty coffee scene as a coffee machine salesman, Holger knows how to make a bag of beans stand out from the crowd.

The company has broken ground since its beginnings in 2004, including launching the first compostable bag in Australia. Today, its range includes a variety of sustainable coffee packaging, such as compostable, biodegradable, recyclable, and reusable options, available in box bottom, side gusset, and quad seal bags as well as stand up pouches. These have been designed to maintain freshness while reducing environmental impact.

More recently, The Bag Broker launched mono-material bags made from recyclable polyethylene (PE) and barrier paper bags, made from kraft paper with PVAL (polyvinyl alcohol) barriers. Holger says these alternatives to traditional multi-layered bags help improve Australia's recycling system, with barrier paper bags offering moisture resistance while reducing petroleum-based plastic use, though less durable.

He emphasises that although compostability is beneficial, it will not be rewarded on its own.

"As environmentalism is heading towards circularity and recyclability, this means governments are not going to promote compostability by itself, unless it can fit inside a recyclability framework," says Holger.

In addition to sustainability, freshness is at the forefront of innovation at The Bag Broker, with packaging solutions prioritising the preservation of coffee quality and taste.

"For most specialty coffee roasters, freshness is a key selling point, and these bags are well-suited for packaging and shipping freshly roasted coffee," he says.

"They offer an excellent solution for maintaining quality over the typical timeframe before the coffee is consumed, making them a great choice for direct-to-consumer or boutique roasteries."

Another hallmark of The Bag Broker's range, particularly in products such as mono-material or barrier paper bags, is its high level of customisability, which enables businesses to tailor packaging to their unique branding and functional needs.

Holger says The Bag Broker team are experts in making each roaster shine through its custom packaging solutions and blending their unique identity with their environmental goals. The natural texture of the kraft paper provides a rustic, eco-conscious aesthetic that can be appealing to environmentally aware consumers.

"We take a collaborative and consultative approach when working with coffee roasters and brands to ensure their packaging aligns with both their branding and sustainability objectives," says Holger.

First, The Bag Broker team works to understand the unique needs of each customer, including their design vision and the functional requirements of the packaging. The team then advise the client on how to achieve impactful, visually appealing designs while considering the environmental impact.

"For instance, we guide them on the types of inks and finishes that are compatible with recyclable or compostable materials," he says.

"Our dedicated artwork team work closely with customers to ensure their branding is beautifully represented, whether it's through vibrant graphics or subtle designs."

And when it comes to selecting the right option for the client, the team are well equipped to educate on the properties and benefits of various materials, helping them choose options that align with their goals.

Whether it's selecting recyclable mono-material bags, kerbside-recyclable barrier paper, or integrating post-consumer recycled (PCR) content, they provide expert recommendations tailored to the client's needs.

Going forward, Holger says the company will continue its sustainability trajectory, with plans to develop innovative solutions that enhance both recyclability and barrier properties of coffee packaging.

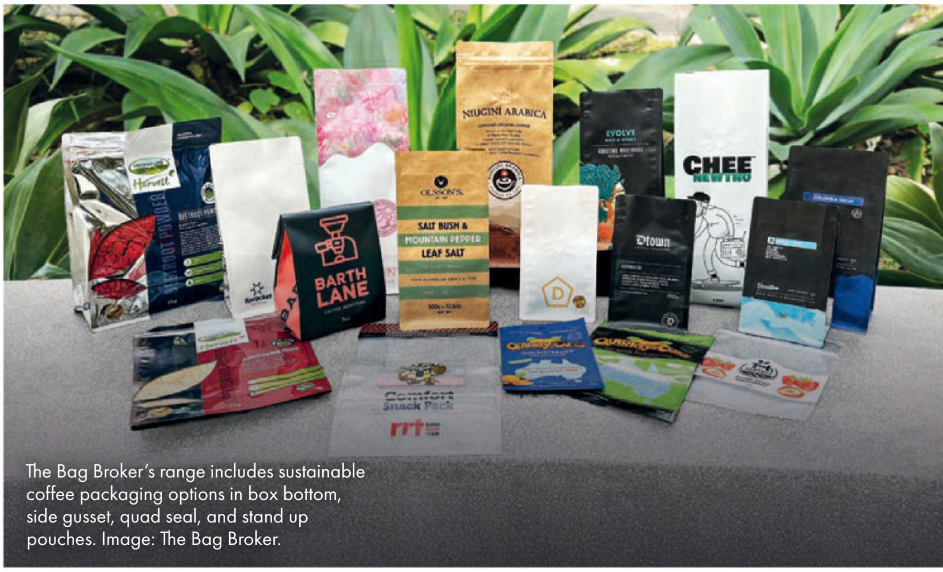
"One notable example is our introduction of packaging partially made from PCR plastics. Here, we're working to reduce the reliance on virgin plastics to contribute to a more circular economy while maintaining the functional integrity of the packaging," he says.

But a key focus, according to Holger, is improving the barrier properties of the company's barrier paper bags and hoping to one day see them on the supermarket shelf.

"While these bags are already suitable for many specialty coffee applications, our ultimate goal is to create a solution suitable and stable enough for a supermarket shelf," he says.

"This would make them a viable alternative for extended shelf life without compromising sustainability or recyclability." ◘

For more information, visit thebagbroker.com.au



The Bag Broker's range includes sustainable coffee packaging options in box bottom, side gusset, quad seal, and stand up pouches. Image: The Bag Broker.

Printing freedom

How Trimatt System's ColourStar AQ V printer helped one roaster create its brand identity seamlessly and in-house.

The brand on a bag of coffee is often a customer's first impression of the product. It's designed to offer a snapshot or glimpse of what's inside, making it an essential tool to reflect the brand's identity in a way that resonates with the buyer.

For most, this entails outsourcing the packaging and labelling, and relying on external suppliers – a process that can involve a lot of back and forth.

Usually, the first step is choosing a design, sending it to the supplier, and then waiting – sometimes weeks – for the proof. Adjustments are made and then production begins only once everything is signed off. Finally, shipping can add even more time to the equation.

This can be a lengthy, sometimes frustrating journey before the labels even meet the coffee bags.

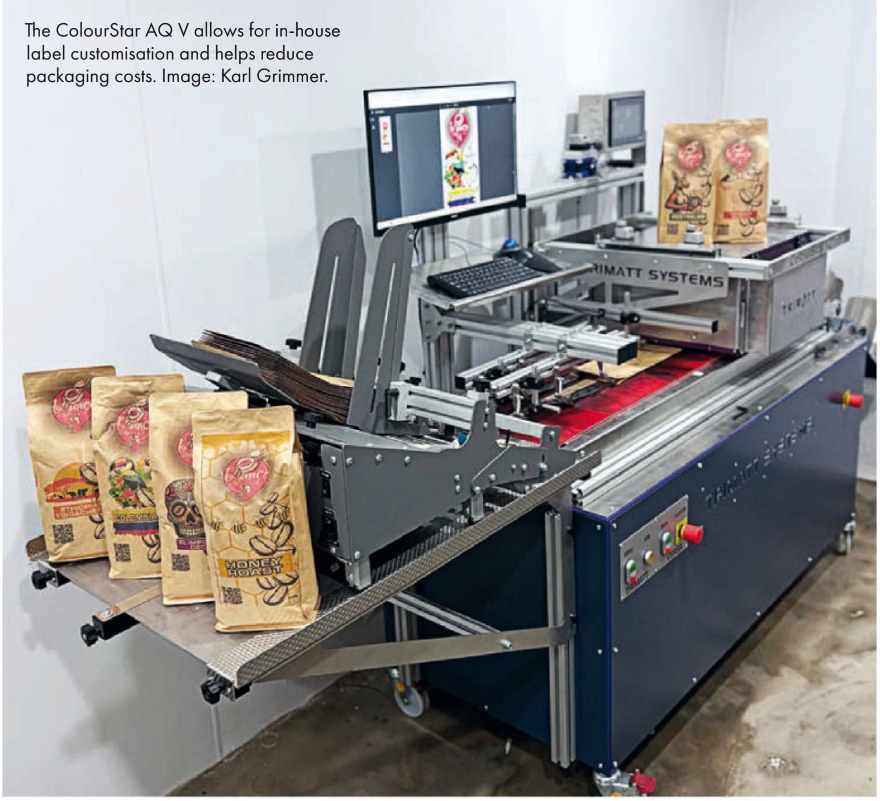
However, Melbourne-based digital print systems specialist Trimatt Systems has developed a solution to streamline the labelling process. Backed by the APPMA Australian Machinery Manufacturer 2024 award and the MICE2023 Product Innovation Award, the company's ColourStar AQ V industrial digital colour printing solution allows for labels to be printed directly onto the packaging.

For Bounce Coffee roasters in Townsville, Queensland, the company's nine original blends each have their own distinct flavour – both in the cup and on the label – thanks to the ColourStar AQ V's Inkjet printing. The roaster's labels are printed directly onto the paper bags in-house, with the team in full control of the process.

Bounce Coffee Owner Karl Grimmer says the time saved and the level of customisation are the printer's biggest benefits. After acquiring Bounce in 2023, Karl relied on external labelling for the first 12 months. Now, he wouldn't consider going back.

"The design is ready, the machine is set up, and within minutes, you're producing high-quality, customised labels for your latest batch," says Karl.

He adds that changes are easy to make: if you want to adjust the text, design, or label size, it's a simple task. Labels can be created on a platform such as Canva. Once the design is ready, the file can be saved as a PDF and emailed to the Inkjet printer. The user just makes sure it's sized correctly for the bag's aspect ratio, and then they're good to go.


The ColourStar AQ V allows for in-house label customisation and helps reduce packaging costs. Image: Karl Grimmer.

Karl says the result is a level of agility and creativity that the traditional supply chain just can't match.

"Since we've had the machine, it's made a big difference. One major improvement is that we now have bags available whenever we need them," he says. "We have nine different blends and with the new system, we've been able to give each its own unique label rather than using a generic label for the less popular products."

This has added an unprecedented level of personalisation to Bounce's blends. Prior to the ColourStar AQ V, Karl says only one or two blends had their own label, while the rest used a generic one.

Bounce also offers its cafés the opportunity to custom print their own small bags.

"We've received some great feedback. A few of our wholesale customers have even posted about it, saying, 'Look what's new', as they show off the custom labels online," he says.

Customisation and differentiation are essential for making products stand out in a competitive market, particularly for roasters looking to highlight their small-batch, limited-edition blends.

"Personalisation helps us differentiate and stand out, especially among all the other options out there. Instead of just using a generic sticker to describe the beans, we now have entire bags designed to match the flavour profile of each blend," says Karl.

Although Bounce handles its own labelling, it's not entirely on its own.

Karl says he has a strong relationship with the team at Trimatt Systems, who are always just a phone call away and ready to provide immediate solutions and ensure a quick turnaround for servicing.

"They've never had to come back to site, but they have been on the phone and helped us solve the very few problems we've experienced," he says.

"When I had someone new on the machine, they talked them through it over the phone to get them up to speed."

This, combined with the ColourStar AQ V's in-house personalisation capabilities, has been key in elevating Bounce's unique brand. ◘

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Riverina Fresh helps to simplify café operations by reducing the number of moving parts in the supply chain. Image: Riverina Fresh.

How to make your café more efficient

Riverina Fresh on how cafés can navigate the many moving parts within the supply chain.

Riverina Fresh has become a trusted partner for many cafés across Australia. The long-standing dairy producer has built this bond through its high-quality products and practical solutions that help cafés manage stock and inventory more efficiently, keeping things running smoothly day to day.

The company understands the nuances of running cafés and is well versed on what drives success – and what creates obstacles – behind the scenes. The team know it's the ideal blend of quality and efficiency that helps coffee businesses thrive.

And when it comes to inefficiencies, Asher Davies, General Manager of Riverina Fresh, says one of the biggest challenges cafés face is simply being time-poor. He says café owners and staff are often stretched thin and have to juggle multiple tasks throughout the day.

"This time crunch can affect various aspects of operations, from placing orders to managing payments," he says.

"Many cafés still rely on manual processes, such as reviewing and approving invoices one by one, which can take up valuable time."

For small businesses, he says this extra time spent managing invoices or ensuring bills are paid on time can add up quickly, creating inefficiencies that may spill into profitability.

Beyond this, he notes cafés often struggle with ongoing staff shortages and high turnover rates, which impacts both service quality and operational efficiency.

"Ultimately, many of these inefficiencies are driven by a lack of time and resources. Café owners often find themselves managing these tasks personally, which can detract from their ability to focus on growing the business or improving customer service," says Asher.

He says Riverina Fresh offers several services aimed at alleviating operational inefficiencies, enabling café owners to focus on what matters most. This includes solutions like online ordering systems and consolidating suppliers. Cafés are increasingly seeking partners that can provide a broader range of products rather than managing multiple vendors and reducing logistical complexities.

"One of the key solutions we offer is our broad product range, which allows cafés to reduce the number of suppliers they work with. By sourcing everything they need from a smaller number of trusted suppliers, cafés can streamline their procurement processes saving both time and effort," he says.

The company also collaborates with online ordering platform Ordermentum, making life easier for café owners by allowing them to set up standing orders and automatically receiving the same stock on a regular basis to streamline the ordering process.

"This eliminates the need for cafés to manually place orders each week and helps them stay on top of inventory without added effort," says Asher.

What's more, Ordermentum enables cafés to set up automatic payments via credit card or direct debit, ensuring invoices are paid on time without needing to dedicate precious minutes to manually processing each payment.

"This combination of product consolidation and automation helps reduce the administrative burden on café owners, freeing them up to focus more on running the business and customer service," says Asher.

He adds that automating or streamlining

orders can also help manage cash flow more effectively. With standing orders and automated payments, café owners can avoid unexpected costs or delays in receiving essential supplies, allowing them to plan and budget more accurately.

"It also reduces the human error factor as streamlined ordering minimises mistakes that can come from manually managing multiple suppliers, manually entering orders, or miscommunication between staff members. Fewer mistakes mean fewer disruptions to operations," says Asher.

The system also integrates with accounting platforms, ensuring all financial data is automatically synced. This not only simplifies day-to-day operations but also makes year-end tax preparation or financial reporting much easier.

"Café owners don't need to worry about sifting through piles of paperwork or entering data manually. Everything is already organised, ready to be accessed, and synced for tax time or any other financial reporting needs," says Asher.

This level of automation significantly reduces administrative workload, minimises errors, and ensures café owners can focus on running their business rather than managing back-office tasks.

Asher says many cafés enjoy the streamlined and user-friendly nature of Riverina's online ordering platform. And, unlike older systems where they would have to rely on trust and follow-up calls or emails to confirm orders, they can now see their order status in real time.

"Many of them appreciate the ease of being able to browse our full product range online. This gives them clear visibility of everything we offer, making it quick and simple to order exactly what they need," says Asher.

"But one of the standout features they love is our real-time delivery tracking, which provides transparency and reassurance with each of their orders"

Real-time tracking allows customers to follow their order's progress throughout the day. After placing the order, they receive a link with the estimated time of arrival and can follow the delivery truck's location to the minute.

"This feature adds a layer of reliability and convenience that significantly reduces any uncertainty about when their order will arrive, so it enables them to plan accordingly," says Asher.

Beyond streamlining orders and being a one-stop shop, Riverina Fresh helps cafés boost efficiency with its consistent product quality.

"Cafés know they can count on our milk to perform consistently – stretching smoothly and reliably to create the high-quality cup of coffee their customers expect," says Asher.

"This consistency reduces any guesswork or extra effort for baristas, allowing them to focus on crafting great coffee rather than troubleshooting issues with inconsistent ingredients."

Asher says while the company's milk products may be priced a little higher due to their premium nature, the overall savings from fewer deliveries, reduced administrative burden, and better product consistency can make a significant difference in a café's bottom line.

By consolidating their orders with fewer suppliers, cafés can save on delivery costs since they only need one or two shipments instead of multiple deliveries from different providers.

"We take a holistic approach to cost savings for our café customers," says Asher, "with the overall value coming from efficiency, reliability, and reducing the number of moving parts in a café's supply chain." □

For more information, visit riverinafresh.com.au

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The Esperto Abile lever machine offers precision tools, pressure gauges, and customisation.

Images: Smeg.

Essence of espresso

La Pavoni on the magic of lever machines and how they can reconnect users to the timeless ritual of coffee making.

In modern lifestyles, convenience reigns supreme. To keep up with the increasing pace of everyday life, many are ditching methods that slow them down and instead opting for fast, easy, and efficient solutions.

Yet, there are still moments when items halt us in our tracks, forcing us to slow down, take a breath, and enjoy experiences often taken for granted. One such instance, according to Smeg Professional General Manager Leon Wolf, is the La Pavoni Esperto Abile lever espresso machine.

The machine, first crafted by Desiderio Pavoni in 1950, is at the heart of the brand's legacy. The journey began with the La Pavoni Europiccola, a lever-operated espresso machine that brought professional-grade coffee brewing into homes and small cafés.

"Unlike the motorised pumps of modern machines, the manual lever design allows users to control pressure and extraction time, making the barista an integral part of the brewing process," says Leon. "Here, they can see how the water, pressure, and coffee interact."

The lever mechanism is not only a functional advantage but an aesthetic feat. And despite advancements in materials, temperature stability, and precision accessories, the machines remain rooted in history.

"Its chrome body, brass fittings, and clean, timeless design reflect the post-war Italian passion for elegant and practical engineering. Lever machines like the Europiccola quickly became symbols of quality and heritage," says Leon.

After the release of the pioneering Europiccola, in 1970 La Pavoni introduced the Professional model, with increased capacity and improved stability for high-demand brewing. The brand then reimagined the lever mechanism again in

2005 with its Stradivari Series, inspired by the curves of a violin. Now, the modern iteration of the machine – the Esperto Series – is designed for connoisseurs who delight in its precision tools, pressure gauges, and additional customisation options.

Although La Pavoni has reimagined its lever machines throughout the decades, Leon says the machines' core mechanism have remained largely unchanged – a testament to their timeless design.

The Esperto Abile, according to Leon, celebrates the often-forgotten connection between human and machine, and repositions craftsmanship back into the spotlight. He says what makes La Pavoni lever machines so revered is their ability to put the art of espresso extraction in the hands of the user.

"In a world that prioritises speed and automation, the La Pavoni lever machine reminds us of the joy of slowing down. It is not just a coffee machine but an experience – a celebration of skill, ritual, and heritage," says Leon.

"Lever machines demand patience, practice, and precision. The manual pulling of the lever creates a deeper connection between the barista and the espresso, and allows for control of the pre-infusion and extraction phases. The flavour profile of coffee extracted with a lever machine is completely different from that of a pump machine."

He adds it's this hands-on experience that sets lever machines apart from modern automated systems.

"You can adjust the speed of the pull – faster or slower – depending on the roast type you're working with and the flavours you want to extract. Sometimes, a longer, slower pull at lower pressure yields different results compared to a faster pull at higher pressure," he says.

And just like manual car drivers are deeply connected to their vehicles as they become part of the mechanism, the user becomes part of the process when they're extracting coffee from a lever machine.

Despite its artistry, Leon says some people can be disheartened when they purchase a lever machine and find the espresso tastes terrible. It's not the machine that's at fault, he says, but rather the coffee, the grind, and the extraction technique.

"With a little coaching and guidance, they could be making amazing coffee," he says. "This, for me, is one of the biggest gaps in the coffee industry: education."

"A lever machine isn't something you turn on and pull a shot 10 minutes later – that's more for semi-automatic machines. With a lever, you need to preheat the machine, flush the line, and carefully adjust your grind and dose. You'll probably throw away your first shot, just to refine it until you get that perfect espresso. But that's part of the joy – the process, the learning, and the connection you build with the machine."

Antony De Fina of Casa Espresso in Melbourne says lever machines naturally do many things modern machines are trying to replicate.

"For example, when you pull the lever up, you get a natural pre-infusion from the boiler, which helps with coffee dispersion. Another key feature, often referred to as a buzzword in the coffee industry, is pressure profiling – where people vary the extraction pressure during a shot," he says.

Antony iterates the grind and dose are the most important variables. The machines typically require a slightly finer grind than a pump machine, and both the grind and the dose need to be very precise.

"They need to be correct. Pump machines may be a bit more forgiving in some respects, but when you get it right, the shot you pull from a lever machine is absolutely magnificent," he says.

Antony says when pushing the lever down, it's important to not push too hard. Having to apply more pressure may mean there is either too much coffee in the mechanism or the grind is too tight.

"The goal is to apply a steady, consistent pressure to get the right extraction," he says. "You also get a feel for it quickly. With a well-set lever machine, you can instantly tell if you've got it right or wrong. The feedback comes through the lever itself, so you'll know what the shot is going to be like the second you start the extraction."

Echoing Leon, Antony says the machines stand the test of time.

"We service machines that are 30 years old, and the beauty of these machines is that there's not a lot to go wrong with them. There are no pumps – just rubber seals. The fact that these machines are still in daily use after three decades is remarkable. There aren't many things in your house that are 30 years old and still working," he says.

As La Pavoni looks to the future, Leon says the company remains committed to honouring its design roots while empowering a new generation to embrace the craft of espresso.

"When you use a lever machine, every shot is a unique experience," he says. "What if we slowed it down and reminded people about the romance of coffee? For me, coffee needs to be removed from the context of just being about caffeine. It should be about the experience, and the lever machine takes us back to the essence of espresso." ◘

For more information, visit **lapavoni.com**

Lever machines can reposition craftsmanship back into the spotlight.
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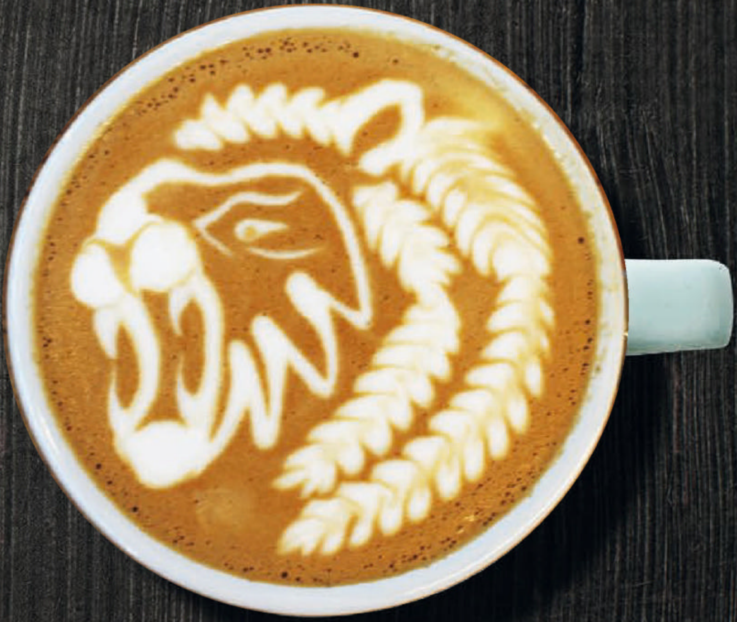
Victor Vu of Ona Coffee Melbourne is the 2024 ASCA Australian Latte Art Champion.

Mighty lion



Australian Latte Art Champion Victor Vu shares his roar-some mighty lion latte art design.

A member of the tribe of jungle-inspired designs Victor presented at the World Latte Art Championships 2024, the mighty lion is an advanced design for baristas with time on their hands. An etching pen is required for the fine details on the animal's face to add expression.

"The lion is the hero of my jungle designs thanks to its majestic nature," says Victor.

"In the creation of this design, I wanted the lion to be as realistic as possible."

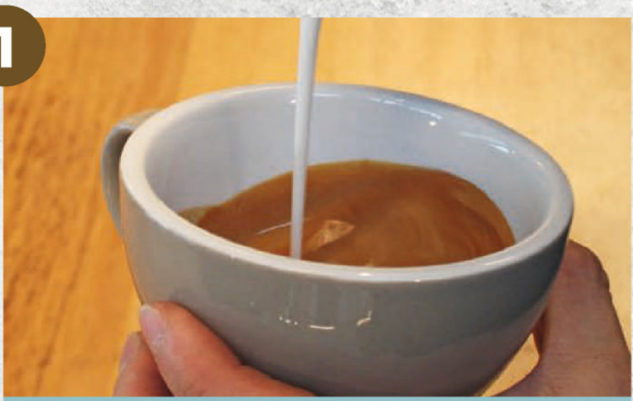
Incorporating rosettas and etching, the fine details of the lion's eyes, nose, and mane require a steady hand and patience. Once the rosettas are in place, Victor says the mane is the trickiest element to get right.

"Using the dragging technique for the mane is the most important part because it will bring out the look and the shape of the animal," he says.

" It expresses how the lion is roaring, so getting it right is essential."

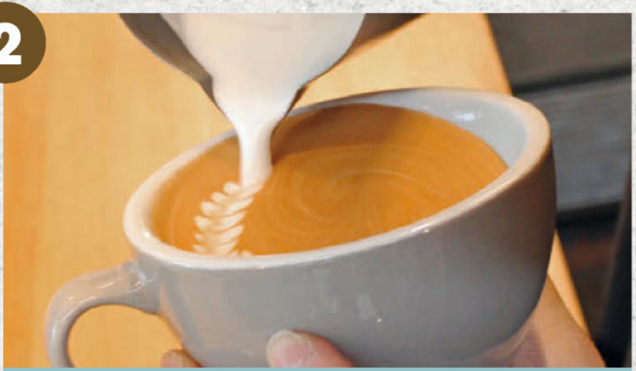
For a final touch, black colouring can be used to highlight the eye and nose using a fine etching pen, as per Victor's mighty lion pour at the World Championships in Copenhagen.

1



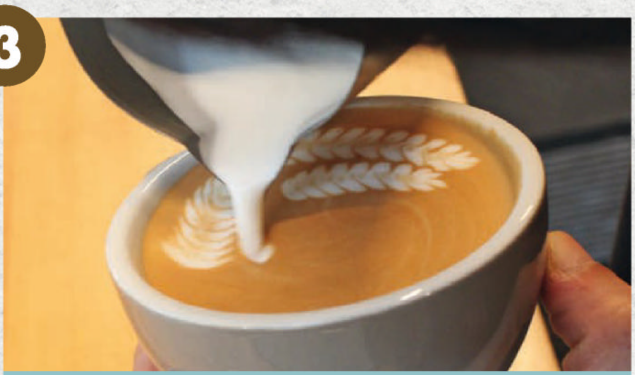
Using a competition-size latte cup, start by mixing the coffee with steamed milk until just under halfway full.

2



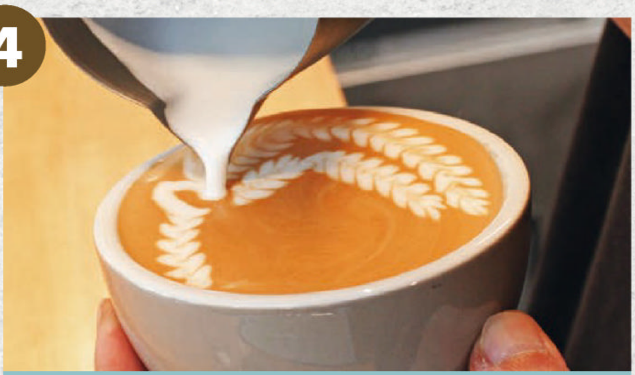
With the handle at three o'clock, pour a six-leaf rosetta at the top of the cup along the right-hand side. Turn the cup to one o'clock and from the bottom of the first rosetta pour a 10-leaf rosetta.

3



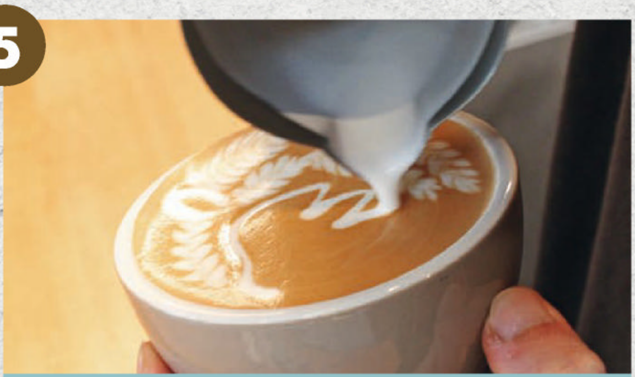
Next to the second rosetta, pour another shorter rosetta in line with the second. Turn the cup back to three o'clock and pour a short rosetta to meet the third.

4



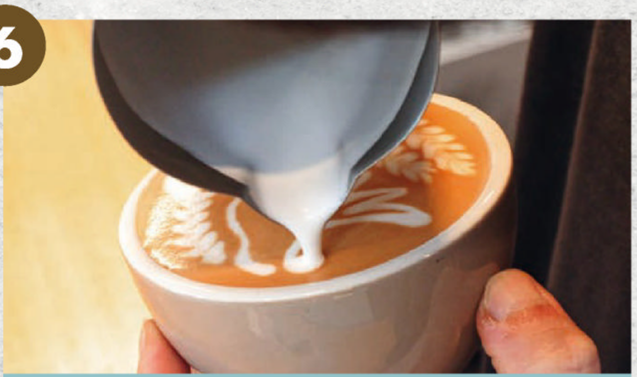
With the handle at four o'clock, pour a small six-leaf rosetta along the top of the cup. From the end of the final rosetta, using a continuous pour drag the milk in a small circle to form the ear.

5



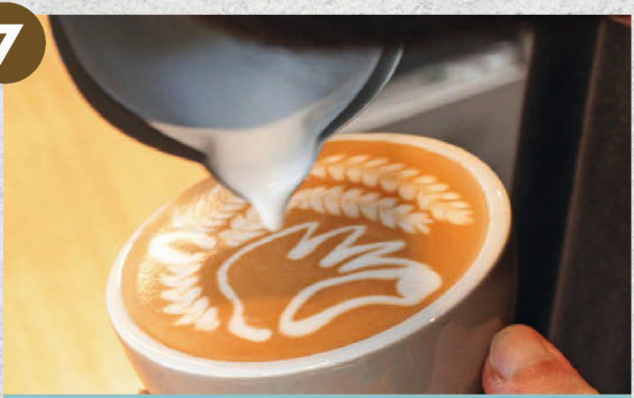
At 10 o'clock, drag the milk towards the first rosettas to form the inner face. Then drag the milk in a zigzag pattern three times alongside the second rosetta to form the mane.

6



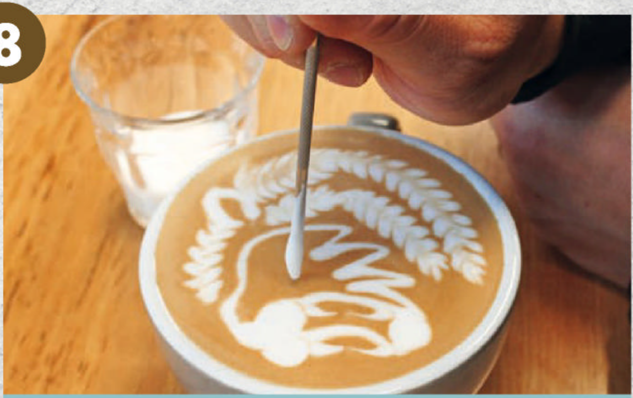
From the bottom of the mane, drag a C shape upwards to form the mouth. Form another C shape next to the first to form the other side of the mouth.

7



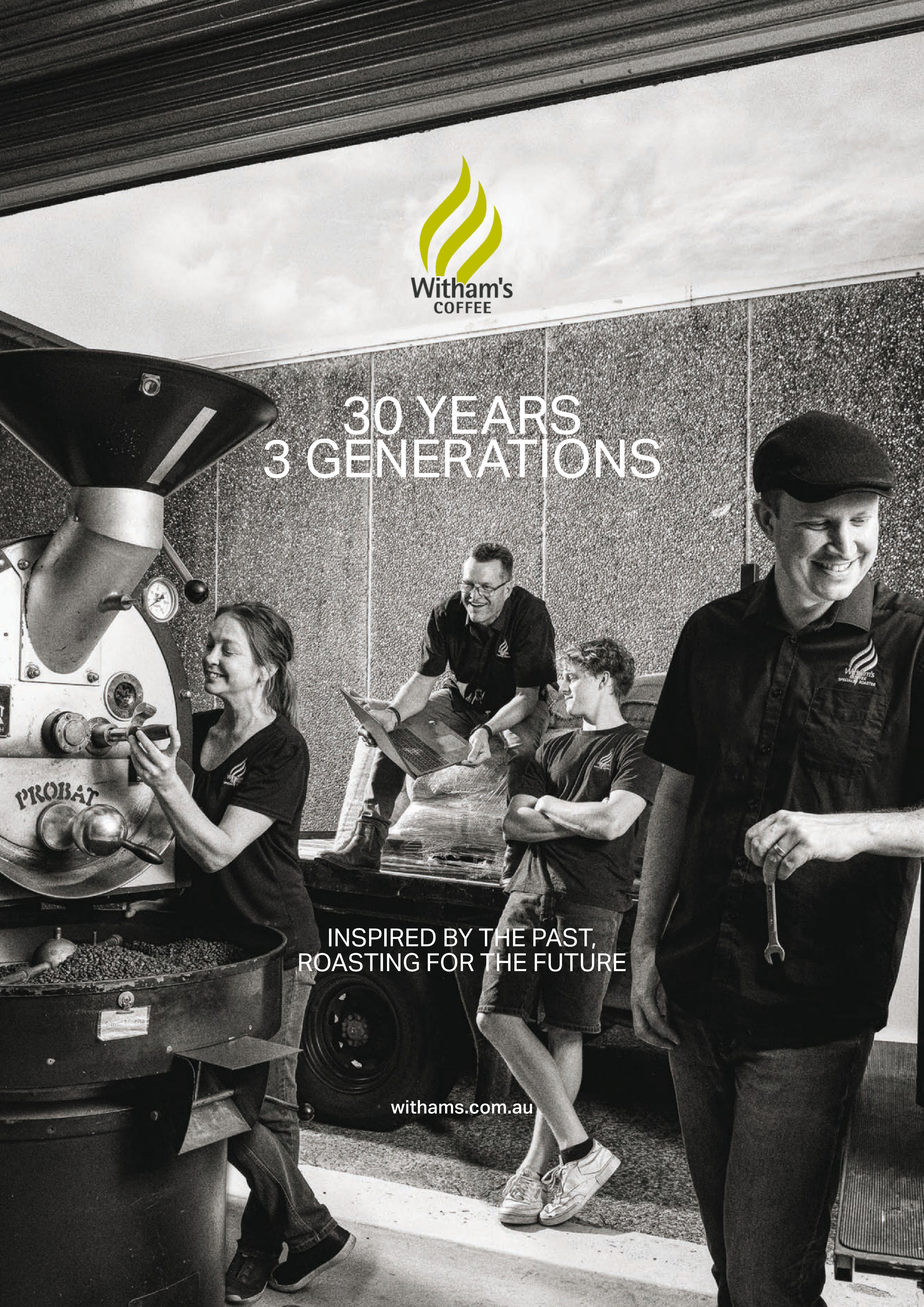
Using the dry foam, form an oval for the bottom of the jaw. Also using the dry foam, form the nose at the top of the jaw.

8



With an etching pen, use the dry white foam to form four teeth. Inside the inner face, use the dry white foam to etch the eye and expression.

Images: Prime Creative Media.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2025 Baked goods BUYER'S GUIDE

BeanScene shines a light on the best wholesale baked goods to pair with great coffee, from handcrafted treats to loaded cookies and plant-based options.

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Dr Shica's Plant-Based Cookies

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Choose from ten perfectly balanced flavours ranging from timeless classics such as Chocolate, Raspberry, and Pistachio to unique creations such as Lemon Meringue Pie, Berry Cheesecake, and Macadamia Passionfruit. Each is packaged in a single-flavour 40-piece carton with two plastic tray inserts, making it easy to display in a refrigerated counter.

For more information, visit **cacao.com.au**

Image: CACAO.

Cookie Man Bite Size Coffee Treats

Cookie Man has all the flavours customers crave, from Classic Choc Chip to Tangy Raspberry White Choc. And don't forget about the irresistible Salted Caramel and Triple Chocolate. If you're looking to buy cookies or mini cookies, Cookie Man's range has something for everyone.

Bite Size Cookies are a cost-effective treat, priced at just 11 cents per cookie. These flaky, buttery, and crumbly shortbread biscuits are simple yet delicious – coffee's perfect companion. Each order contains approximately 660 cookies in two cookie buckets. Freshly made every day, these cookies are crafted using only the finest Australian ingredients and are 100 per cent Australian made with real butter.

For more information, visit **cookieman.com.au**

Image: Cookie Man.

Image: Cookie Man.

Cookie Man Loaded New York-Style Cookies

Cookie Man's New York-Style Cookies come in eight delicious flavours including Classic Choc Chip filled with Hazelnut Filling, Brooklyn Brownie, Decadent Fudge Brownie, Lady Liberty (rich chocolate pecan), Madison Square Macadamia (white chocolate macadamia with Biscoff filling), Rockafella Velvet (red velvet with cheesecake filling), Sassy Soho (white chocolate roasted macadamia and caramel fudge), Manhattan Monster (M&M's and Oreo), and New Yorker (triple chocolate peanut butter filling). These 150-gram thick cookies have a rich gooey centre and are loaded with mouth-watering toppings.

The New York-Style Cookies starter pack is available for a limited time and includes a complimentary display case that holds up to 16 cookies. Made from nearly 100 per cent Australian ingredients, these cookies are Australian made and crafted with real butter.

For more information, visit **cookieman.com.au**

bitesize wholesale buckets

With more than 100 years of industry experience, the team at bitesize understand what true hospitality means. Established in 2006, bitesize manufactures award-winning gourmet biscuit using traditional family recipes.
Selecting the right coffee supplier is key, but pairing it with a premium accompaniment is equally paramount. Aligned with quality, consistency, and authentic hospitality, bitesize is for premium cafés that are serious about service and excellence. You won't find bitesize's wholesale buckets of 300 pieces on any supermarket shelf.

For more information, visit **bitesizegroup.com**

Image: bitesize.

MACADAMIA
bitesize
RASPBERRY
bitesize
SALTED CARAMEL
bitesize
CHOC CHIP
bitesize

Image: bitesize.

bitesize retail packs

What's the best part of working with bitesize? Cafés can set their own prices for retail packs and cover the costs of their complimentary cookies. Proudly Australian made and owned, bitesize offers exclusivity to café partners. Its premium retail packs feature: Raspberry White Choc, Salted Caramel, Choc-Chip, and Macadamia White Choc. When customers ask, "Where can we buy these?", wouldn't you want your café on bitesize's exclusive partner list? Partner with bitesize and make it happen.

For more information, visit **bitesizegroup.com**

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IMA Coffee Lab is the ideal plance to experiment, analyze, deepen coffee knowledge, enhance its transformation, redefine product objectives and achieve them.

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Saturday and Sunday 8am to 3pm

Major Mitchell, named after a pink cockatoo, is nestled in a heritage building in Melbourne's southeast.

Images: Katie Devic.

As visitors pass through the cast-iron gates marking the entrance of Major Mitchell and step into the café, they are greeted with a space celebrating pink, bright hues.

The venue in Melbourne's southeast is the brainchild of Katie Devic who has 16 years' experience of setting up cafés internationally, including Dubai and Singapore as well as across Melbourne.

"I wanted to bring something new to the area and deliver a point of difference for our food to create a welcoming neighbourhood charm," she says.

The café is nestled in a heritage building that served as the Glen Huntly post office from the 1930s through to the 1990s. The front of the building is original, and its big open grass area with umbrellas serves as a family friendly nook.

"The outside area is bright and playful. There's a cubby house – a replica of our café building – in the corner for kids to play," says Katie.

But when visitors walk inside, there's an entirely different feel. Tall ceilings and bright hues keep the space fresh, inviting, and airy.

Katie opened the café in the midst of the pandemic but was optimistic about its potential despite the rolling lockdowns.

"My ambition was to create an open space with a big and colourful garden area, beautiful roses, and fruit trees. I wanted to create something spacious and vibrant where families can bring their kids while other can enjoy a long boozy brunch. It's great seeing people have lunch or coffee under our lemon and olive trees," she says.

The off-beat menu is complemented by a collection of house-made cakes.

As customers bask in the pink hues of the venue, they can sip The Bean Cartel's La Patrona blend, described as aromatically complex with peach and maple syrup, and a smooth nougat aftertaste.

"It makes you want to have that second cup. It's like a big, warm hug with chocolate notes and a smooth flavour."

Although Major Mitchell customers are huge fans of the coffee, Katie says she chose The Bean Cartel for its family-like feel.

"They're always just a text message away and the coffee is consistent. There have been times when I've needed help because someone's called in sick and I've texted them to see if someone was available to help for an hour. And sure enough, they were there behind the coffee machine in no time," she says.

While Major Mitchell's bright pink door is a beacon for coffee hunters, the real fun is in the kitchen. Katie says she strives to keep the menu unique, drawing inspiration from Middle Eastern, Asian, and European cuisines.

For example, one of the café's signature dishes celebrates mushrooms three ways: featuring sautéed mushrooms with a mushroom ketchup served on a truffle potato rosti.

The off-beat menu is complemented by a big display of house-made cakes.

"Our carrot cake is divine with a long black, as well as our yogurt biscuits that the chefs make," she says. "Our daily array of desserts and pastries is just phenomenal."

Inter/Section's Coffee Anthology space celebrates coffees from across Australia.

Image: Adam Wang.

INTER/SECTION

155 Charlotte Street to 150 Mary Street,
Brisbane City, Queensland, 4000
Open Monday to Friday 7.30am to 3.30pm,
Saturday and Sunday 7.30am to 2pm

At his Brisbane venue, Adam Wang aims to curate the best of what Australia has to offer under one roof. Inter/Section began as multi-roastery café Coffee Anthology, showcasing the country's specialty coffee scene.

It has since expanded to include The Whisk, offering fine and creative croissants and patisserie, as well as Fika, which serves Asian-fusion dishes.

"Inter/Section is one unified space that incorporates everything from local and international coffee, pastries, breakfast, and lunch – all in one venue," says Adam.

Set in a heritage-style building, the venue design is a blend of classic, contemporary, and sleek.

Adam established Coffee Anthology 10 years ago when the concept of multi-roastery cafés wasn't widespread.

"I thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if I could have one shop where we could showcase a variety of rotating roasts from across the country?' This way, customers wouldn't have to go out of their way – they could come to one place and try all the great coffees."

Now, Coffee Anthology visitors can enjoy coffee by Cavalier, Black Mass, and Talo from Brisbane, Small Batch and Market Lane from Melbourne, Sample Coffee from Sydney, and Unison Coffee from Newcastle, among others.

"You can come in and try both our own roasts and some of the local and international roasts we carry," says Adam.

"We have two bars: one focuses on local coffees and the other serves international roasts. So, every day customers have a broad selection to choose from."

As a long-time supporter of La Marzocco, Adam says the Strada EP espresso machine is ideal for showcasing different coffees and allowing for precise control over brewing.

In 2024, Inter/Section also acquired the first Strada X in the Southern Hemisphere.

"It was a game-changer for us and has made a huge difference, especially with high traffic and given us the control and consistency we wanted," he says.

"Now, we have both machines on either side of the bar. It's been a great combination to keep things running smoothly."

BESSER BREW BAR

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Saturday 7.30am to 2pm,
Sunday 8am to 2pm

Danni Mann is known for bringing the specialty coffee scene to Darwin in 2014 with her first venue, Laneway. Once it had become a local institution, she realised there was a growing need for a vibrant coffee community in the area.

"Before long, we outgrew our original space. That's when the opportunity to open a second venue came along," she says.

Laneway's sister venue, Besser Brew Bar, is tucked away in an industrial nook in the northern suburbs of the city.

"This second café allowed us to expand with a larger prep kitchen and embrace a fresh, dynamic vibe, enabling us to offer an even better experience for our customers," she says.

On first impressions, it doesn't look much from the outside, but those who step through the doors are greeted by lush green plants, soft timber details, and an unexpected splash of pink. Although a contrast to its façade, it still honours the industrial setting.

Beyond the aesthetics, Danni says the people within the venue are what make it shine.

Besser Brew Bar is tucked away in an industrial nook of Darwin.

Image: Danni Mann.

"Our team goes far beyond the typical café experience. They're dedicated to creating more than just a great cup of coffee – they make it their top priority to offer a personalised experience that makes every customer feel welcome and valued," she says.

Behind the espresso machine is Tricia, the Northern Territory's Best Barista 2024, serving four blends from Zest Specialty Coffee Roasters in Melbourne.

"Each blend caters to a variety of flavour preferences, and we were immediately drawn to the sweetness and complexity of their offerings. We're also amazed by the incredible single-origin beans Zest has access to, which allows us to offer an ever-changing, diverse coffee experience," says Danni.

When it comes to pairing Besser's coffee, Danni says the avocado toast is a standout. It's made with smashed avocado, topped with grapefruit, Meredith Valley goat's cheese, watermelon radish, toasted almonds, sesame seeds, and beetroot relish, all served on sourdough toast.

"The balance of salty, fresh, and vibrant flavours perfectly complements the sweet notes of our coffee," says Danni.

LEOHT

46a Hampden Road,
Battery Point, Tasmania, 7004
Open daily 7.30am to 3pm

Leoht's design stands out by leaning into natural light.

Images: Harrison Scarf.

Leoht in Hobart's Battery Point almost didn't exist.

For Harrison Scarf and his partner Chanel, finding the right spot that celebrated natural light has been the hardest part of their hospitality journey thus far.

"We wanted somewhere with natural light and all the goodness that comes with it. And in Hobart, that can be a little tricky," he says.

According to Harrison, there are a lot of venues that do a great job leaning into darker, wintery vibes, but there aren't as many embracing natural light.

"We wanted it to be a celebration of the early morning and getting your day off on the right foot," he says.

Just as Harrison and Chanel were coming to terms with the idea of not finding their perfect spot and started planning a trip to walk the Camino de Santiago in Spain, the phone rang.

"After a lot of hard work, saving money, and looking really hard for a space, the stars aligned. In the 11th hour, when we were about to give up, something popped up," says Harrison.

"We saw the bones of a great venue, got stuck into it, and turned it into what it is."

Besides light, fresh Tasmanian produce is at the forefront of the café's offering. Here, the ingredients speak for themselves and slot right into the wholesome vibe of the venue.

"We use whole foods pretty much everywhere we can, so it's all wholesome produce," he says.

"We try to use all natural products with real flavour and create food that's delicious, but nourishing and healthy as well."

This includes menu highlights such as the corn and jalapeño bread with poached egg and avocado for breakfast, and the grass-fed beef noodles for lunch.

Enhancing Leoht's atmosphere, the café serves Campos' Superior blend as its signature espresso. For its daily batch brew, it features either the Sydney roaster's juicy Blade Runner filter blend or a carefully selected, in-season single origin.

Leoht serves Campos Coffee's Superior blend as its signature espresso.

A former Campos employee, Harrison was intrigued by the "dark art" that is creating an exceptional coffee.

"I hadn't really had an experience where I was like, 'Okay, this is amazing coffee'," he says.

"That was, until I went to the Campos flagship store in Fortitude Valley in Brisbane, where I had a flat white. I was genuinely amazed at how good coffee could taste. I realised this is what people are searching for, and this is what people are talking about when they refer to a 'good cup of coffee'."

From that moment, Harrison became determined to craft coffee of that calibre, a passion he now brings to life at Leoht.

"I quickly realised not many people have had a good cup of coffee before. I love that people are loving it," he says.

The community itself, according to Harrison, has a small village-like feel to it, with the locals welcoming the café with open arms since it opened in 2024.

"Building connections within the community and seeing those familiar faces every day has been really rewarding," he says.

And as Battery Point is a popular tourist destination, Harrison and Chanel enjoy connecting with travellers and giving them suggestions to include in their itineraries.

"Chanel and I are both passionate about what Tassie has to offer, and how great the island is," he says.

"We love how we can share that with visitors, give them some of those local insights, and then send them on their way to what we know is going to be a great adventure for them."

UNWINED ESPRESSO BAR

22 Rosenthal Avenue,
Lane Cove, New South Wales, 2066
Open Monday to Saturday,
6am to 12pm, Sunday 7am to 12pm

Luke Harriss was a musician, playing drums for a living, but when gigs became scarce and in need of something else to do, he convinced friend and Australian cricket legend Brett Lee to enter the café business with him. After co-owning a couple of cafés, Luke went solo while Brett focused on cricket.

Unwined Espresso Bar has been in Lane Cove, New South Wales, for 25 years. It began as a café until a bar was added about 15 years ago. Over COVID, Luke restored the building and shifted to just a 30-square-metre space that's focused on quick service and getting the basics right.

"We don't have seating inside anymore; it's more of a grab-and-go setup. Originally, when we had the bar, it had more of a vibe, but now we're focusing on quick turnarounds," says Luke.

Quick, but without compromising on quality.

"We've always done a bacon and egg roll, which is a favourite among the tradies. So, we came up with something called a Tradie Roll, with bacon, egg, hash brown, and cheese. It's nothing fancy, but it works," says Luke.

He shares a similar philosophy when it comes to coffee. Luke originally worked with different roasters to create an Unwined house blend, but he reached a point where the quality wasn't quite up to scratch. He then came across Witham's Coffee.

"During COVID, I read an article about Witham's, so I called them up and thought they'd be worth a try," he says.

"We've been using Witham's ever since, and the results have been unbelievable – the roasts are top quality. Back when we first started, we were doing about 15 to 20 kilograms a week, but now we're doing between 24 and 40 kilograms a week, which is great for a café that's only open five or six hours a day."

Unwined focuses on quick turnarounds and getting the basics right.

Image: Luke Harriss.

Jibbi & Co offers a bit of everything, including pasta, breakfast options, and a range of fresh cold-pressed juices.

Image: Najib Karam.

JIBBI & CO

155-161 East Parkway, Lightsview,
South Australia, 5085
Open daily 7am to 9pm

Since the age of 10, Najib Karam and his brother Joey have spent much of their time in cafés, growing up in the heart of their family's business.

After completing university, Najib thought it made more sense to play to his strengths and run a hospitality venue rather than complete a corporate stint.

"It was more organic to be able to continue doing what I'm good at," he says.

As a result, in 2018 Najib and Joey established Jibbi & Co in Lightsview, South Australia.

The venue offers a bit of everything, including pasta, breakfast options, and a range of fresh, cold-pressed juices. There are also Mediterranean inspired dishes, with special menu options such as a traditional fattoush salad, shish tawook, and kofta skewers.

"It's a big, versatile operation that caters to a wide variety of tastes and needs," says Najib.

Additionally, the café features a traditional Italian wood-fired oven, one of the first things customers spy when they walk in, which is used to make authentic pizzas.

Najib says the menu pairs perfectly with Veneziano Coffee Roasters's all-rounder Elevate blend, which features notes of milk chocolate, nuts, and honey.

Above all, he takes pride in watching the business evolve, from running a small café to managing a seven-day operation that handles breakfast, lunch, and dinner, which means the duo work a significant amount of hours a week.

"Being able to coordinate all that between my brother and I, while having a strong crew that's well-trained, is really satisfying," he says.

What's even more rewarding for Najib is witnessing the transformation of the café staff.

"We get young people, often inexperienced and sometimes shy, coming in as their first job while still in school or university. By the time they leave, they've developed great social skills, they're more confident, and ready to take on the world in their future careers," he says.

"And most of the time, they leave far more capable and confident than when they started."

Reynold Poernomo

The *MasterChef* alumni on creating a complete dining experience at KOI Experiential, his new KOI Dessert Bar in Melbourne, and the creative inspiration behind his culinary vision.

Name:	**Reynold Poernomo**
Venues:	**KOI Dessert Bar/ KOI Experiential**
Instagram:	**@reynoldpoer**

Image: Tery Gunata.

What drew you into the dessert world?

When I was 14, I would see my Mum create a lot of desserts and experiment quite a bit at home. She also had an amazing collection of cookbooks, which got me curious and excited about the fine dining side of desserts.

Your most memorable or rewarding career moment?

Kicking off KOI Experiential in Sydney in 2022. It's been a bit of a rough ride, but it gave me the chance to run a 12-seater restaurant where I could let my creativity loose, no holds barred. It was not just a creative win for me but also a moment where I really grew into my style.

What sparks your inspiration when creating something new?

You can't force creativity – it just doesn't work. Having a theme helps keep things on track. I like to pull ideas from everywhere: colours, art, and stories. I'm working on this dessert dining concept called 'reflections', which is influenced by everything seaside – shells, pebbles, rocks. It's about capturing that coastal essence.

How has coffee played a role in your dishes?

I've been playing around with cold brewing to get a strong, clear coffee flavour. One challenge I've faced is making an entirely white tiramisu that still packs a solid coffee punch. I'm experimenting with distillation to extract the coffee flavour without any of the colour, trying to create a dish that looks simple but surprises you with its depth.

How do you ensure a memorable experience for your customers?

At KOI Dessert Bar, it's all about the first impression. We aim to wow our customers with our display cakes, which are all about vibrant colours, different textures, and bold flavours.

What's next for you?

I'm looking to build my dream restaurant in Indonesia – that's the big plan. Having focused on desserts so intensively over the past five years, I'm ready to broaden my horizon and deliver a full dining experience. Australia's been fantastic, but I reckon Indonesia's where I can really push the boundaries and establish myself further in the industry. ◼

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